

£2 million scientific share-out

A £2m microprocessor education fund, set up by the University Grants Committee, is to be distributed around Britain's universities over the next few months.

The money consists of this year's UGC equipment grant reserve of £1m and a further £1m for microprocessor development introduced into the committee's recurrent grant allocation for 1978-80.

Universities have already received letters informing them of their individual grants, which include a one-off equipment allocation and a recurrent element which "under present policies will continue at least at the level stated in subsequent years".

In his letter to the universities the UGC chairman, Dr Edward Parker, emphasizes that the money is to be used to improve the general quality of microprocessor applications to all science and engineering students.

"This approach stems from the belief that all engineering and science graduates need to be fully conversant with the technical potential of microprocessors in their own field," he says. "A significant number of these should be capable of the detailed design and incorporation of micro-circuits and microprocessors into new products and processes."

However, Dr Parker adds that those students specializing in the design and making of micro-electronic devices would be best catered for by a few universities, concentrating on this subject.

Time to expand adult teaching says NATFHE

by Patricia Santinelli

In the wake of major cuts in adult education provision throughout the country, NATFHE, the National Association for Teachers in Further and Higher Education, is a policy statement released today.

NATFHE wants a strong lead from the Government to encourage local education authorities to adopt policies designed not only to meet the current but future needs of adult education. Only this could ensure that a coordinated policy on education for adults, providing for all levels of education, is developed.

It warns that demographic trends indicate that greatly increased demand for adult education is likely in the future. This will require both an increase in the number of adult education centres and in the present figure and in day time provision with substantially improved staffing levels.

"It is of critical importance that subsidised child care facilities be provided for centres offering day-time education," the policy statement says. "Without such facilities, calls for increased opportunities, especially for women, will be totally meaningless."

The association is particularly anxious that women, ethnic minorities, physically and mentally handicapped people, and those who are offered greater opportunities as part of a comprehensive system of adult education.

It recommends that free access to adult education should be increased by abolishing fees, while it also represents an unambiguous statement and determination against those who have not benefited from mandatory grants, and are not eligible for aid.

Grants for part-time courses should be extended to a mandatory basis and compulsory grants made available for all courses below degree level, NATFHE says.

NUS protests at White Paper curbs on overseas admissions

by John O'Leary

Controversial new regulations governing the admission of overseas students to Britain were included in the White Paper on immigration this week.

Student organizations reacted angrily to further restrictions on the length of stay allowed for foreign students taking a succession of different courses, and on the assessment of academic credentials of intending students.

The National Union of Students said the White Paper confirmed suspicions it already had about the powers of immigration authorities on academic questions and it regarded the proposals as yet another attack on overseas students.

Meanwhile the proposed increase in overseas students' tuition fees is likely to become a political issue within the European Economic Community, forcing the Government to grant exemption to students from member states.

Although no distinction has previously been drawn between categories of overseas students, there has been growing concern that Britain could be accused of breaking the terms of the Treaty of Rome.

Mr Mark Carlisle, Secretary of the NUS, said: "The White Paper is a clear indication of the Government's intention to curtail the rights of overseas students."

by Ngalo Crequer

The last pre-medical course in London which enables students from a non-science background to train as doctors, was closed today in an unopposed campaign by staff and students.

A decision has been taken by the Medical College of St Bartholomew's Hospital to close the pre-medical course (formerly the 1st MB) by 1981. The following year the college will close the 2nd MB and a similar course and this year's intake is the last.

The one-year medically oriented course enabled successful students without three science A levels to go on to medical school. It means that Arts students have lost an alternative route in.

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Anger over lectures drive

A student campaign for better lecturing standards has provoked an angry rift between the national union and the Association of University Teachers.

The cause of the row was a survey of student views on lecturing methods at Manchester University, which was prominently featured in the NUS newspaper and subsequently given national publicity. The survey was said to present a "disturbing picture" of lecturing standards.

Now Dr Andrew Taylor, president of the A.U.T., has sent a sharply worded letter to Mr Trevor Phillips, the NUS president, protesting at what he described as an attack on lecturing standards.

State for Education, has said he is considering modifying the new arrangements to take account of the position of EEC students, and the outcome is almost certain to be their classification as home students for the purposes of fees.

Such a decision, which is unlikely to be announced in the immediate future, is bound to bring fresh protests from students from Commonwealth countries. Mr Trevor Phillips described the possible exemption of EEC students as "the most vile betrayal of all."

Mr Phillips said: "It seems that if you are European or Chinese you will be regarded as a home student, but all the people Britain has been trampling on for 400 years suddenly have no rights."

Mr Phillips' head of the EEC Commission division responsible for education, said he hoped Mr Carlisle would soon clarify the position. "We very much hope that the United Kingdom Government will now decide, in its strategy on the financing of higher education, to have a special policy in relation to EEC students, which is based on the idea of reciprocity between the nine states," he said.

"That is without prejudice to its policies on other categories of overseas students. The concept of reciprocity means they should be treated as if they were home students. We hope the Government will recognize the particular needs here, not least because the numbers are so small—2,970 in the current academic year," he added.

If exemption is granted, EEC students may become eligible for grants, as well as cheaper tuition fees, if they are temporarily resident in the United Kingdom. A working party at the Department of Education and Science is considering the question of residence qualifications, but one French student has already been given a local authority grant on the advice of the Treasury Solicitors.

Home Office and DES officials are also considering special arrangements for Vietnamese Boat People taking up further education courses. An announcement on this subject may coincide with Mr Carlisle's promised bursary scheme for postgraduate students from overseas.

Despite some initial confusion, it has been made clear that other postgraduates will be charged fees at the new rates outlined in the White Paper on public expenditure.

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Special pre-medical course mortally ill at Bart's

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VAT takes millions from university coffers

The universities have lost millions of pounds because of the increase in Value Added Tax despite the general rule that educational services are exempt.

This has happened because of the difference between the timing of the increase, which went up from 8 per cent to 15 per cent in June, and the payment of next year's recurrent grant in July. Effectively, the universities have lost their VAT cover for just over a year.

When the tax was first introduced in the early 1970s it was agreed that universities would largely be exempt. They would pay the tax in the normal way and the University Grants Committee would repay it through an earmarked grant.

But the UGC decided not to earmark the money but include it in the block grant. So the last recurrent grant announcement included a national sum for VAT at the old rate of 8 per cent.

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Universities withdraw from validation

Two universities are poised to withdraw from their traditional validating role in colleges of higher education, arousing fears that college validation might eventually become the monopoly of the Council for National Academic Awards.

Bradford University has already decided to cease validation at Tilley College as soon as possible after this academic year, while London University senate is expected to approve similar action at its meeting next month. Six colleges have degrees validated by London, and at least two wish to continue the link.

The heavy costs of administration have been a major factor in both cases, as have doubts over the universities' competence to examine in areas outside their normal scope. In London, a committee chaired by Professor J. E. Vary has concluded that administrative and academic difficulties are such that withdrawal is the best solution for both sides.

The confidential report has already met with criticism from some of the college principals, who claim that the report, which is critical of some aspects of the colleges' work, creates the misleading impression that standards are low.

Individual assessments are made of Shoreditch and St Mary's Colleges, Southampton, Chelmer and West London Institutes. Goldsmiths is excluded because its application to become a school of the university is pending.

Although the report acknowledges that an accurate comparison of standards is difficult to achieve, it notes that the colleges' standards are, in some degrees, particularly where three subject combinations are concerned, also criticized the level of discipline allowed in selecting subject combinations, considers some of the large libraries redundant, and points out that many staff members were recruited to teach certificate courses and not degrees. Some courses are said to be too small to be viable.

Professor Vary's committee has four options for dealing with the problems it lists but considers a radical and possibly expensive one, "a complete reorganisation of the subject boards rather than the Institute of Education, the Institute of Management Studies, and the Institute of Social Studies."

There is little doubt the sharp reduction in planned spending will contribute to the country's ability to finance basic research at universities and scientific institutions. Last December, Mrs Williams pledged a total of £47m to be added to the science vote between 1979 and 1983—the first move for many years to end the cash stagnation facing research councils. Now this has been eradicated by the Tories.

The Neutron Spallation Source at Rutherford may have its completion date put back from 1982 to 1984.

In reaching its conclusions, the committee acknowledges that such a step might set a precedent, but the way for an eventual "new" Education Council of the Institute of Education at its meeting last week drew back from open support of the recommendation to withdraw.

However, in its resolution to the senate meeting which is to take a crucial decision, the council has only qualified support to the proposal to continue validation under a new system. It expresses profound regret that the university's academic council has supported withdrawal, while recognizing the arguments for such a course of action.

What form links with the unions and the colleges has been the major hurdle in finding a way to begin covering the colleges once more, following a dispute four years ago when the Charity Commissioners sent TUC a proposal for a 51 per cent body to be set up to control the TUC's affairs.

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Carlisle to cut deeper into science budgets

by Robin McKie
Science Correspondent

The Government is set to fix next year's science vote—the cash shared out to Britain's research councils at £298.5m. The figure represents a 5.7 per cent cut in research budgets compared with the sum originally earmarked for the 1980-81 science vote by the previous Education and Science Secretary, Mrs Shirley Williams.

She had fixed the 1979-80 vote at £306.1m, which would have risen to about £317m for the 1980-81 budget. However, in June the Conservatives reduced this year's figure to £301.1m and now they are to cut next year's to £298.5m, although there is to be a slight additional increment of about £1m to go on various measures including energy conservation.

Now the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has written to the Government outlining its proposals for sharing the burden of the cuts and it is expected their figures will soon be accepted by the present Education and Science Secretary, Mr Mark Carlisle.

However, it is clear the reductions will not be made on a pro rata basis as some councils were already scheduled to take reductions in their portions of the science vote. In particular, the Science Research Council is to have its cut limited to 10 per cent, although it was already expected to take such a reduction before the science vote was slashed. This means its grant will only drop from the present figure of £167m to £155m next year.

The Social Science Research Council will take a cut from £15m to £14.7m—a drop of 2 per cent. This roughly corresponds with the general percentage drop in the present science vote to next year's level. In June the SSRC took the largest reduction—8.4 per cent—add there were fears such a drop would be repeated.

However, the three remaining research councils—the Agricultural Research Council, the Medical Research Council, and the Natural Environment Research Council—will see their budgets held at this year's levels, although they were scheduled to receive increased portions of the science vote. This means the ARC budget will be £27m; the MRC will get £51m; and the NERC will get £34m.

The rest of the science vote will be split between the British Museum—£5m—and the Royal Society—£2.5m. These amounts are unchanged from this year's levels.

These figures will be altered to make account of inflation at the start of the next financial year, although there will be no effective increase in the councils' spending powers.

There is little doubt the sharp reduction in planned spending will contribute to the country's ability to finance basic research at universities and scientific institutions. Last December, Mrs Williams pledged a total of £47m to be added to the science vote between 1979 and 1983—the first move for many years to end the cash stagnation facing research councils. Now this has been eradicated by the Tories.

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and the Nuclear Structure Facility at Daresbury may lose some subsidiary line funding. The development of new UK astronomy and space programmes could also be affected.

However, there is now real concern among the councils about future budgets—for there is no way they can sustain these continuing levels of cuts over the next few years. They will now be urging the Government to announce its cash guidelines for 1981 to 1983, so they can make realistic plans.

If the science vote does not rise, councils will then be forced to axe complete areas of scientific research, rather than carry out a complete range of activities inadequately.

Science budget
As proposed in December, 1978
(1) in 1978 prices
(2) in 1979 prices
After June, 1979, budget cut
After scheduled November, 1979, cut
Percentage drop from original December, 1978, guideline

1978-79
£274m
£306.1m
£301.1m
£301.1m
1.6

1980-81
£284m
£317m
Not given
£298.5m
5.7

Former Conservative Education Secretary Lord Boyle yesterday turned on his former colleagues to join a queue of eminent protesters on the subject of overseas students' fees. He accused the Government of blatant racial and sexual discrimination.

Lord Boyle's remarks, made at a meeting of the Court of Leeds University, where he is Vice-Chancellor, followed demands from Lord Bullock for an inquiry on the proposed fees. Lord Bullock and Mr Brian Bender, chairman of the Oxford Colleges Admissions Office, particularly deplored the impact on postgraduates from abroad and called for the new fees to be shelved pending a full inquiry.

Overseas students were outlined this week when the British Council published its annual report, announcing the closure of its offices in Reading, Stratford and Cambridge, and the withdrawal of English teachers in seven countries. Sir John Llewellyn, Director General of the Council, warned that further cuts would cost up to 1,000 jobs and would endanger the English language teaching for 42,000 students abroad.

The council's budget has been cut by 14 per cent, with the loss of 500 jobs in Britain and overseas. The administration has been cut to dangerous extent, Sir John said, and future cuts could only be imposed directly on services.

These cuts were among those criticised by Lord Boyle yesterday in his most outspoken attack on Government policy, which he said was dominated by the "fashionable dogma of monetarism." He supported Professor Ralf Dahrendorf's recent statement that the proposed introduction of full economic fees would create the impression that Britain was no longer interested in maintaining its international cultural relations.

"I simply cannot see how British universities can hope to go on competing on the proposed terms, and the consequences may well prove to be not only profoundly regrettable but also irreversible," he said.

Mr Clifford is to be chairman of the new governing body.

Grants system could include private colleges

by John O'Leary

The mandatory grants system may be extended to cover some private colleges following a review of independent institutions ordered by Dr Rhodes Boyson, the Under-Secretary for Higher Education.

Among the first to benefit would be University College, Buckingham, which was asked by Dr Boyson to submit a formal application for inclusion on the mandatory list. Three other institutions were also included in a study carried out in the awards section of the Department of Education and Science.

The paper, completed in the summer, listed three options: maintenance of the status quo, a complete reversal of previous policy on private colleges, or consideration of individual cases. Although a final verdict is still to be reached, Dr Boyson has taken the final option and will not be making a block decision.

"We have been inquiring into this whole area," he said. "It is important to look at this from time to time both in reality and in principle. No decision has been reached yet and, of course, it is impossible to say what will happen in the present financial climate."

University College, Buckingham, which is known to enjoy the support of both Dr Boyson and the Prime Minister, would appear to be the most likely to succeed in its application. Professor Max Beloff, the principal, said the new government's more favourable attitude towards the college had encouraged him to ask for influence to be exerted on local authorities to grant discretion for awards more freely to his students. He has been advised instead to try for mandatory grants.

Professor Beloff said success would remove one of the final obstacles facing the college, which has now been accepted as a suitable institution for the awarding of research grants.

Among the other institutions under consideration is the Architectural Association School of Architecture, London, which was removed from the mandatory list in 1972 when Mrs Thatcher was Secretary of State for Education.

The other two colleges to have submitted applications are the British School of Osteopathy, Westminster, and the Gateshead Talmudical College.

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Sandra Hempel reports from the Open University Conference on the Education of Adults at a Distance

Lord Perry calls for global course bartering system

A world-wide system of course bartering for distance learning institutions has been called for by Lord Perry, vice chancellor of the Open University.

Speaking in Birmingham this week at a conference to mark the Open University's tenth anniversary, Lord Perry said it was expensive to set up a course and many countries did not have sufficient students to make the cost per head worthwhile. Even the Open University could only offer a limited range. Bartering would be done through an international institution to which all countries involved in distance learning would contribute knowledge and skills and from which all could draw help.

It would be difficult to find the money to do it, said Lord Perry, and there were other problems such as academic pride—most of it false—fear of redundancies and problems

of course coherence and language. Talks were already going on between heads of OL institutions, however, to find ways of achieving the aim.

Outlining the achievements of the Open University during its 10 years, Lord Perry said it had produced 38,000 graduates with degrees equal to those from conventional universities. It had failed, however, to maintain its policy of easy access in two areas:

"Firstly, we can only admit 40 per cent of applicants due to the size of our grant, and secondly fees have been forced up so high and student grants are so difficult to get that the poorest people can no longer afford to be students."

Nevertheless, said Lord Perry, the Open University had been an act of faith that almost amounted to a miracle. It was a gigantic gamble by a government not noted for its educational adventurousness.

'Greying of the campus' in America

America is experiencing the greying of the nation and, with it, the greying of the campus, said Professor Bernard Luskin, of Coastline Community College, California.

"By the turn of the century the median age in America will be 35, and in less than 30 years one person in every five will be over 65. This means that the great growth in higher education today is in providing for the needs of older, part-time students."

At the same time more people are living in cities, Professor Luskin said. By the year 2000, 85 per cent of the American population will be living in urban areas.

"Technology is advancing at a rapid rate," he added, "and knowledge is portable. It can even fly through the air. We now own 400 million radios, 121 million televisions and 61 million people subscribe to newspapers". In the past education was like measles—you took it and it was over, now the United States is in the era of life-long education and the 50-year college.

Adult education had to include courses and programmes for living, for work and for coping. At his college, Professor Luskin said, there were 150 physical teaching locations, including banks and city halls, in 10 cities covering an area of 105 square miles. It was a new dimension in community-based distance learning. Anyone over 18 can enrol, and the average student age is 39. One of his 19,000 students was aged 101, and she was doing a correspondence course.

The aim of Coastline, Professor Luskin said, was to take education to the people. The administration was at grass roots level, to remain as responsive as possible to student needs. The curriculum was vast, and included life interests such as gardening, and occupational courses, such as banking and insurance.

"The community itself is our campus and the college exists where learning occurs", Professor Luskin said. "This example doesn't mean other institutions which are serving us well should be replaced. It simply offers another dimension."

For educators, the future was bleak, he said. It was to try to look forward without being rigidified by stereotypes, but to be so arrogant as to assume that the shape of education to come must mirror the individual's own past experiences to achieve broader personal and social goals.

A good communications system was also vital, and colleges should make determined efforts to improve radio and air networks, postal services and video and television. But it was no good waiting until these had been perfected: this would not break the vicious circle. All degrees of success, page 12.

Thailand takes leaves from the UK book

It is impossible to adopt any existing system for distance learning. Each institution must find its own model to suit its country's economic background. These were the conclusions of educationalists from Thailand during the recent session of the country's Open University.

Professor Wichit Wichitakul, Sukhothai Rajavidyalaya, Bangkok, told the conference.

"We have recently changed the intended focus in OU to be more at the start of the project, to look for a satisfactory blue-print or successful precedent to follow. We studied such universities as the OU, trying to learn from its long experience in teaching at a distance."

In developing countries, mass communications were advanced enough, said Prof. Wichit. The use of radio and television was limited and there had to be more reliance on correspondence methods. As local educational facilities were scarce and inaccessible, it meant independent learning had to be supplemented by more teaching staff and more travelling.

Another problem was public opinion. The use of radio and television was used as a medium of instruction in many countries, it is virtually impossible to make use of existing teaching materials from other Open Universities in developed countries," Prof. Wichit continued.

Thailand obviously helped by structural material still had to be developed. Professor Wichit believed that the possibilities for an exchange of teaching materials between distance learning institutions were limited.

What could be exchanged instead, however, was technical knowledge.

The main key to success lay in the staff available, said Prof. Wichit, and in developing countries there was already a lack of well-qualified staff in conventional universities. A new Open University would further deplete the staff.

Even if well-qualified staff were recruited, they still had to be orientated from the traditional educational system and transformed to enthusiasts and experts in a new system.

Distance learning has revolutionized higher education which for centuries a sacred rite practiced behind closed doors," he said. "Academics involved in an Open University need to undergo a conversion of the soul."

Pension funds demand more

by Ngaio Crequer

University finances are to suffer another blow as a result of a shortfall of more than £100m in their staff pension fund. Individual institutions have been asked to raise their contribution to the national superannuation scheme.

The first valuation of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) since it was introduced in 1975 has found that liabilities are likely to exceed assets by £102 million.

The universities have therefore agreed to a recommendation by consulting actuaries that their contributions should rise from 12 to 14 per cent of salaries. This will take effect from April 1980. The total employees' contribution of 64 per cent of salary will remain the same.

The USS scheme, for academic related staff, was originally introduced because the existing scheme, the Federated Superannuation

System for Universities (FSSU) was felt to be inadequate. Twice hardship schemes had to be introduced and in the sixties the universities had to top up the benefits to keep them in line.

An advantage of the USS scheme is that widows' and dependants' pensions are automatically increased in line with the cost of living.

It was generally expected that at the first valuation there would be some kind of a shortfall because the great majority of members of USS transferred from FSSU and their year-for-year credit is higher than could have been expected under the previous scheme.

The deficiency has been increased for a number of reasons. The valuation, which disclosed an initial shortfall of £86m, did not take into account the substantial number of members, 3,569, who joined the scheme after April 1978.

Secondly, in the short term, assumptions about rates of interest

and salary inflation have been made on the low side, although in the long term this may not prove to be the case.

In the future it is assumed that overall, new members to the scheme will provide surplus assets, probably in the region of £10m a year. This has been taken into account in the decision to increase contributions. That decision will be reviewed at the next valuation.

The remaining question is whether the University Grants Committee will make up the universities' lost revenue caused by the increased levy.

At the outset of the scheme the UGC said that any increase above 10 per cent demanded from the universities as employers would be met. If such a sum were an earmarked grant then the universities would be reassured. But if the sum is simply held to be part of a general supplementary allocation then universities feel it may get "lost" in the overall amount.

Clegg hears special plea for Polys

by David Jobbins

Polytechnic teachers' pay should be considered separately from the rest of the further education sector, the Clegg Commission has been told.

In its second submission the Association of Polytechnic Teachers, admits it may prove impossible to do this but argues that Clegg cannot make a satisfactory recommendation unless it is.

The APT submission adds further evidence to support its longstanding claim that polytechnic teachers have fared badly in comparison with university lecturers.

The Brighton report in 1975 defined the career grade in the polytechnics as Lecturer II/Senior Lecturer and set this against the university lecturer grade. The LII/SI scale now runs from £4,470 to £8,250 while the claim for a university lecturer is £5,200 to £11,785.

APT says comparisons elsewhere are as follows: Civil Service college lecturer £8,130 to £12,530; Civil Service scientist £6,332 to £11,343; hospital pharmacist £6,711 to £12,800; hospital scientist £6,711 to £12,036.

In the civil service starting salaries for honours graduates were from £5,035 to more than £7,300 after two years' service.

The prospects for new accountants show salaries between £6,000 and £8,000 as quite normal for products of polytechnic departments, with even higher salaries for tutors," APT says.

Blueprint to end binary system

by John O'Leary

All the polytechnics and some colleges should be given university status in order to end the binary system in higher education, a new tract published this week recommends.

Mr Peter Scott, editor of the Times Higher Education Supplement, criticizes the present arrangements for continuing to serve mainly the young, male, and middle-class. He calls for a "What Future for Higher Education?" he calls for drastic reorganisation to include the universities which should be liberalized by a future Labour Government.

A mixture of local authority and central funding would service the new university sector, which would include perhaps a dozen colleges of higher education and Scottish central institutions. The remaining colleges could be linked to universities in a federal, though not necessarily integrated, structure.

The present system has failed partly because successive Labour Governments have not provided sufficient resources for the polytechnic sector. The universities, as popular alternatives to the universities, are in a position to control the growth of the sector.

The association argues that such services are also extremely important because the growth in size of institutions, in the range of courses, and the increasing pressure being put on these students and academic staff who hitherto undertook much



King Olav of Norway arriving at the Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh last week on a private visit. He was greeted by the university's chancellor, Lord Thomson of Monifieth (left).

Wider student counselling urged

by Patricia Santinelli

A call for comprehensive student counselling arrangements to be set up in all institutions of further and higher education has come from the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education this week.

Speaking about the new policy statement, Mr Peter Dawson, general secretary of NATFHE said that it was timely in view of the increasing pressures upon students arising from the Government's economic policies.

"As discretionary grants are cut and mandatory grants fail to keep pace with inflation, students face more and more financial problems. Increasing unemployment causes great uncertainty and anxiety among students about their future. Proper counselling facilities are absolutely critical in this very difficult period," Mr Dawson said.

The association argues that such services are also extremely important because the growth in size of institutions, in the range of courses, and the increasing pressure being put on these students and academic staff who hitherto undertook much

of the counselling functions. It recommends that in the larger institutions there should be a department or unit which integrates counselling with, for example, careers advice, medical services and accommodation. In smaller institutions such a service could well be the responsibility of one person in conjunction with a team of tutors.

The association wants both teachers and professionally trained staff to be involved. It recommends a ratio of at least one student counsellor per 700 full time equivalent students.

It suggests that course tutors on whom the main burden of counselling will still fall should have their time tables altered and be given appropriate training. Personal tutors in the other hand should not attempt to discipline students, but concentrate on helping them academically.

Moreover it suggests that full members of the academic staff and additional to the teaching staff should be involved in the planning of departmental and other levels and be consulted about admission procedures.

Nobel prizewinner and shop steward join in society's celebrations

Science Correspondent Robin McKie traces the history of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science which today celebrates its tenth anniversary.

A special meeting of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science was being held at the London School of Economics today to mark the 10th anniversary of the foundation of one of Britain's best known radical science organizations.

The speakers were to include the society's president Professor Maurice Wilkins, of the Biophysics Chair at King's College, London, and joint-winner of the 1962 Nobel prize for medicine, and Mike Cooley, of the Lucas Aerospace Combine shop stewards' committee, and various BSSRS members.

There were due to discuss their involvement in the radical science movement, assessing the present role of the society and discussing its future policy—a process providing a timely opportunity for assessing an organization that has fundamentally altered its direction and aims since its inception.

Formed from the remnants of the early left-wing scientists' movements, the BSSRS developed from a 1968 international conference on chemical and biological warfare. An inaugural meeting followed in 1969 at the Royal Society when the foundation of the BSSRS was supported by many leading scientists including 41 RS fellows.

At first the society closely followed the traditions of the radical policies of its predecessors—particularly in opposing the uses of technology which it felt to be anti-human. For instance, in 1970, the society sent a team to the Bogside in Belfast to investigate the use of CS gas by the Royal Ulster Constabulary—concluding that the gas had produced far more serious and widespread effects than had been previously admitted.

It was soon evident that there was also a growing movement within the group opposed to what it considered the elitist nature of much of its personnel of established scientists.

At the 1970 annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, this element made its presence felt through a series of protests, theatre shows, demonstrations, pamphlets and "awkward questions" at BA lectures.

The following year, the growing polarization—although not actually producing an official split—resulted in a rapid withdrawal of the less radical and more senior members. Many of these people were later to regroup to form the traditionally based Council for Science and Society.

The move left the BSSRS isolated from the rest of the scientific community. Its membership of about 600 is mainly made up of young, postgraduate students with more senior scientists continuing to avoid involvement.

However, a truly radical science group is necessary for any society that wishes to question the direction and aims of its technology. For all its faults, BSSRS has achieved a great deal in carrying out that function and after 10 years, can look forward with some confidence that it is in a stronger condition than in many previous years.

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Cuts opposed in adult service

A major national campaign group to fight local education authorities' cuts in adult education, has been set up. The group was established this week.

Set up under the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education's aegis, the campaign group represents no less than 20 organizations, including the main teachers' bodies and unions, adult education groups and bodies such as the TUC and the Workers' Educational Association.

Speaking about the campaign, the newly appointed chairman, Mr Robin Gray, president of the Association for Adult and Continuing Education said that by representing such a wide range of interests they hoped to make a much greater impact than an adult education body fighting on its own.

The group will have two main thrusts. The first and most immediate is to oppose cuts in adult education being perpetrated by local education authorities.

succeeding years, the BSSRS has slowly regained credibility through some well researched and carefully prepared reports.

For instance, it carried out effective work when reporting to the Parker Inquiry into Army-RUC interrogation methods in Ireland—concluding from only theoretical psychological material that sensory deprivation interrogation techniques were liable to produce long-lasting traumas in its victims.

Other areas of involvement have included reports attacking those who link race and IQ on genetic grounds; on sociobiology, the science of explaining behaviour in purely biological grounds; and on the Rothschild reorganization of the science research councils which the group saw as an unacceptable attempt by the Government to tighten its control of science and technology.

Perhaps its most useful work has concentrated on the thorny problems of work hazards and together with trade unions, the society has carried out detailed work on problems of noise, oil, vibration and, most recently, asbestos. In each case this has resulted in a book-length pamphlet published in conjunction with the group's bi-monthly journal *Hazards Bulletin*.

This breadth of involvement reveals the wide interests resulting from the group's definition of science as any legitimate theory backed by any form of expertise. This forces an interest in not only basic science and technology but areas such as child psychology, operations research and planning.

Under such a definition, the society maintains it is impossible to separate science from politics. As an inherently socialist group it stresses that technology and science must be seen as a cooperative action stretching from the shop-floor, the scientist's laboratory. Science, at the moment, is far too much an elitist practice carried out by an establishment grouping, it argues.

But this approach suffers from being essentially negative and highlights a basic ideological flaw which undermines BSSRS policy—that it cannot find a truly credible alternative to the smug, unaccountable world of establishment science to which it is opposed.

Of course, the lack of a reasonable Utopia to hold up as a model is a problem that affects all socialist groups but a more positive role for the BSSRS could have been found perhaps if it linked itself more strongly with the issues now being raised by environmental pressure groups.

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Crossing the communications gap

Developing countries must reduce their dependence on overseas training, Tanzania's Minister of Education, Nicholas Kufanga, told the conference.

The help given by friendly countries in manpower training went a long way towards bridging the gap between manpower requirements and its supply in developing countries, he said, and would remain important for some time to come, but it was becoming an increasingly difficult proposition.

While developing countries used to receive scholarships to help train people abroad, the trend now was just to give places—leaving the developing countries to pay all the expenses.

"It is no longer cheaper to train a student abroad," he said. "It costs Tanzania just as much to keep a student at the University of London as it does at Dar es Salaam."

Tanzania desperately needs trained people of all kinds. Although the country is one of the least developed in the world—with a per capita income of \$5165 a year, life expectancy at 53 years, and 90 per cent of people living in rural areas—the country is growing very fast. Communal farms, health

centres, primary schools and small-scale industries are all being established.

They need trained teachers, doctors, engineers, technicians and managers, Mr Kufanga said. There is, for example, only one doctor for every 22,000 people, and one agricultural expert for every 3,000 farming families.

"This is because there is a shortage of higher education. The country has only one university and 10 colleges to cater for 17.5 million people."

And Tanzania's problems are typical of many developing countries. Because of the very high cost of building campuses, governments must look for cheaper and more flexible ways of educating people and training them for work. This was where distance teaching could come in, to supplement rather than replace traditional methods.

To develop distance learning, developing countries needed certain basic ingredients, Mr Kufanga said. They included the institutional facilities, firm support from the government, money, adequate communications, and some technical help.

Polys may face 'hidden bill' of £10m

by David Jobbins

The polytechnics' hidden share of the cost of course validation by the Council for National Academic Awards may be as high as £10 million a year.

Figures circulated among polytechnic directors suggest that the cost adds up to a staggering £30,000 a year for the typical polytechnic. The report was compiled from findings at half-a-dozen "typical" polytechnics. Surveys took place at a time when anger and frustration were growing at all levels with the staff time devoted to submissions and resubmissions, which either CNAA-associated work.

How far this resentment is reduced when the CNAA and polytechnics together begin to operate the new streamlined validation procedures, unknown at this time, remains to be seen.

The polytechnics surveyed were a representative sample of large and small institutions which had recently undergone a major restructuring and were now beginning to operate.

When the total is broken down, the validation cost of a CNAA diploma is £15,000 a course, which

allows for validation and revalidation may amount to as much as £20,000. Interim course visits £12,000; other visits by CNAA officers £4,000.

On-going course and academic developments to meet CNAA requirements add a further £41,000. Other heavy commitments include staff service on CNAA bodies (£18,000) and fees to CNAA assessors and examiners (£16,000).

The results have been circulated to directors of polytechnics not included in the survey, and indications are that the figures arrived at are of the right order of magnitude.

Mr David Machell, chairman of the CIP, says a slightly lower estimate of the cost at a Conservative education conference in Leicester. He put the cost per polytechnic at £9 million.

He commented: "This cannot be justified in principle. We must seek a more cost-effective validation system rather than money any educational institution."

In addition to the CNAA validation, with degree validation, and degree courses were validated

by TEC, BEC and a "plethora" of other bodies.

"All this process costs a good deal of money. The system needs simplifying, and the institutions made to undertake responsibility for this operation, and then be more accountable to the public."

Mr Bethel has consistently argued that polytechnics should strike an independent of the strict CNAA control to become chartered bodies offering degrees accredited by the CNAA. Mr Terence Miller, director of North London Polytechnic, also supports the proposition of chartered polytechnics.

He was less than enthusiastic about the new CNAA policy. Writing in his report to the governors, he commented: "This is clearly a reaction to expressions of resentment and dissatisfaction emanating from a number of institutions. Unfortunately although it proposes a number of more or less cosmetic variations, on the present arrangements the new policy makes little progress towards restoring independence. He regarded the cost of the CNAA as polytechnics as "formidable".



John Power is one of 23 pupils from north London schools taking part in a work experience scheme at Middlesex Polytechnic. The polytechnic unions have agreed to let the young people work in polytechnic offices, libraries, canteens and workshops.

Welsh plan to keep the sexes 18 miles apart runs into some problems

David Jobbins

he Polytechnic of Wales may have a drop plan which would have effectively segregated male and female students on two campuses 18 miles apart.

A scheme to move the predominantly female arts and social science courses from the main Trefoest site to Barry, the polytechnic's teacher training base, had been drawn up by the director, Dr. John Davies.

But it is understood that Mid-Glamorgan county council, which owns both sites, is actively considering selling off assets outside its boundaries, of which Barry is one of the largest.

Teacher training at Barry, where there are about 50 students, is due to end in 1981. Under the transfer scheme, courses would begin to move from Trefoest next September.

Even if the plan is not thwarted by the sale of the Barry site to South Glamorgan, which is believed to be interested in buying it, public spending constraints may at least delay it.

Polytechnic sources say that the plan approved by the governing body and academic board was not costed. But universities in transfer would obviously be large. It is

claimed that it would cost £50,000 just to move the necessary books. The library staff and faculty, heads are believed to feel that the move cannot be achieved satisfactorily in the time envisaged by the plan.

The students have drawn up major objections to the plan, and are vigorously campaigning in favour of selling Barry to concentrate resources on Trefoest.

Their case is that the isolated courses would become prime targets for education cuts; the arts and social science courses contributed disproportionately more to the social and cultural life of the polytechnic, and the transfer would lead to the

improvement of the main campus; the costs would be enormous, travelling time excessive, and there would be poor academic results because of the psychological effects of transfer.

They also point out that while the polytechnic resists Barry, which has excellent sports and recreational facilities, it is difficult to justify improvements at the main site, which is poorly served.

In support of the argument that Trefoest would assume all the external characteristics of a university, the student union president, Mr. Julian Hamilton-Fisher, pointed out that the polytechnic's male

female ratio of 50:1 dropped to about 7:1 with the introduction of the courses.

It is understood that the Council for National Academic Awards, which is the highest academic body in the country, also expressed a view that one site was preferable.

This view is shared by the leader of the Labour majority on the Mid-Glamorgan council, Councillor Philip Squire. "I think it would be better during this period to concentrate our resources on one campus rather than two," he said. "It is rather unsatisfactory to say the least to operate on two different sites."

Councillor Squire has started consultations with the governing body.

Northern Ireland wins fees concession

Paul McGill

Foreign students attending courses in Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from lower fees than their colleagues in Britain, the Under-Secretary of State responsible for education in the province, Lord Eilon, has announced.

The extension of the concession for a further year was a piece of good news in a package of £10m cuts announced by the Northern Ireland Minister last week. The concession, which is believed to have no commitment to be given beyond next year.

At the moment, "overseas" students in Northern Ireland pay the same fees as local students—around £600 on average for undergraduates, and about £900 for postgraduates.

Lord Eilon noted that the Government had decided that new overseas students in Britain would have to pay the full cost of tuition from next year.

In Northern Ireland, where there are proportionally fewer overseas students, it has not been the practice to have a differential in the fee for home and overseas students. I am pleased to say that this arrangement will continue for a further year," he said.

Ikley saved from threat of merger

John O'Leary

Threats to the independent existence of Ikley College have receded following the announcement of next year's State Support Grant. The option of merging the college with Bradford College, raised in a local authority officers' discussion paper, is now unlikely to be taken up.

Bradford education authority called for a reassessment of its further education provision in the light of three possible levels of cut, despite the fact that the last discussion on this topic took place only in 1977. In the event of the most extreme cut envisaged, 12 per cent, being necessary, the officers' recommendation was that Bradford and Ikley Colleges should amalgamate.

However, with the RSG pinned at 61 per cent, such drastic action would appear to be ruled out and lesser economies likely to be adopted. The merger proposal goes ahead, academic strengths at both the colleges would have been endangered because of the different facilities available.

Teacher education would probably have been concentrated on Ikley, threatening Bradford's multi-racial expertise. The Ikley's performing arts courses would have been difficult to provide in Bradford.

Ikley narrowly won a decision in Bradford Education Committee over whether it or Bingley College should close as a result of the last round of cuts in teacher education. It is now one of the smallest colleges and is awaiting the fate of the Bingley campus to provide the capital to improve facilities for performing arts.

In the meantime, the college is also hoping to transfer validation of its degree to the Council for National Academic Awards. Bradford University having decided to cease validation as soon as possible, the university has agreed to continue validation for at least another year, "as an emergency measure" to allow Ikley to carry on its negotiations with the CNA.

The report of an institutional review, which is to be discussed by the CNAA soon, and the college hopes to have its first council approved for next September. Mr. John Mackenzie, the college principal, said he was delighted with the support received from the university and pleased with the CNAA report.

Mr. Mackenzie denied that the CNAA had demanded substantial capital expenditure before it took over total approval of the institution. The proceeds of the sale of the Ikley site, which was bought by the Bradford Education Committee, would be used to improve the college's facilities in the meantime, he said.



Wendy Budden is one of three women who have joined a graduate engineering training scheme at Trent Polytechnic. The scheme puts engineering students through an eight-week practical course in the polytechnic's workshops, followed by prolonged periods working in industry. Wendy is one of 13 graduate trainees sent on the course by Plessey, the electronics company.

Quango closure 'brings DES credibility into question'

Patricia Santinelli

Angry reactions to the proposed closure of the Centre for Educational Disadvantages have come from the National Association for Teachers. NATFHE hopes that the Government will reverse its decision, announced last week, which it claims was taken by the Department of Education without any attempt by Ministers to see the centre's work.

This body, set up for the department, has been the subject of a "discreditable" NATFHE says. "The centre's closure will have a deleterious effect on efforts to establish a fair and just multicultural society in Britain."

CED established in 1975 will be the second educational quango to be disbanded by the Government.

The abolition of the Youth Service Forum was announced in July. The centre, based in Manchester and with a current grant of £32,000, was set up to draw together the results of research and development on educational disadvantage undertaken by other bodies, to disseminate advice to teaching staff, and to encourage new developments in schools and colleges.

The Government's view is that the centre has not wholly fulfilled expectations, and that a continued grant would not provide value for money.

But NATFHE argues that the closure is a particularly inept measure which will mean little in money terms but cost a great deal in terms of availability of help for the educationally disadvantaged.

NATFHE warning over 16-19s

Unless the further education service, rather than the Industrial Training Boards, is given a major role in the vocational preparation of young people in employment, the Association for Teachers in Further and Higher Education warned this week.

The association's comments are in response to the consultative document, *A Better Start to Working Life*, issued by the Labour Government in April. Responses to the document are now being directed to the recently set up McGarvey committee, which is to report on issues affecting the 16-19 age group.

The document proposed a 150m per year to educate about 200,000 young people aged 16-19, without any suggestion of further education or vocational training. The plan would involve the young people working in industry for a period of time, followed by a period of study in a further education institution.

NATFHE emphasises that, while the Government's intention to provide a better start to working life is laudable, the plan does not suffer the same fate as the existing Vocational Preparation scheme, which the document proposes to replace.

Moreover, any new approach to vocational education should be based on the commitment and experience of teachers in further education.

Minding their own business

The Institute of Education Council is a break away from City and Guilds and is granted complete autonomy by next year. It will be able to set up its own headquarters in high Britain to house its own staff which, up until now, have been housed by the COLI.

The council's move was not unexpected until 1983-85, its advance date has been possible only because of its financial independence, and its success in establishing a degree course and system of non-degree courses, a broad area of business and public administration.

Some residual services will continue to be provided for City and Guilds. It is also planned that the council will continue to provide a range of courses, including those in the area of business and public administration.

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Art school keeps its independence

Students of the School of Art in the City of London Polytechnic are to remain in independent art school, despite the fact that the polytechnic is to be merged with the City and Guilds of London Institute.

A decision by the council to allow the school to remain independent was a relief to the school's staff and students, who had been concerned that the school would be absorbed into the City and Guilds of London Institute.

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North American News

College spending rise over five years

from Clive Cookson

WASHINGTON

Struggling aside calls to restrain the growth in Government expenditure, the House of Representatives has authorized a substantial increase in federal aid to higher education over the next five years.

By an impressive 385-15 vote, the House passed a Bill expanding and extending until 1985 the higher education programmes administered by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (and soon to become part of the new Department of Education). Congress has to reauthorize these programmes every five years.

Ninety per cent of the \$45,000m expenditure authorized over the next five years represents student financial aid. (Research grants, which are the biggest source of federal income for the major universities, are not part of this reauthorization process.)

The various grant and loan programmes involved are described in the article on page 8.

The maximum value of a basic educational opportunity grant will rise in four stages from the present \$1,800 or 50 per cent of educational costs, to \$2,560 or 70 per cent of educational costs in 1984-85.

The increase in the dollar ceiling particularly pleases the high-cost private colleges and universities, while raising the percentage level is important to the low-cost public institutions.

The maximum awards under the other two grant programmes, the Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grant and State Student Incentive Grant, are increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000 and the minimum funding level for each is increased.

The two loan programmes, the National Direct Student Loan and Guaranteed Student Loan, will also grow. The maximum loan over four undergraduate years is increased to \$15,000 at 7 per cent interest for each son or daughter attending college or university. A move to raise the 3 per cent subsidized interest rate on NDSLs was defeated.

Another interesting amendment, which the full House adopted against the advice of Representative Ford, would allow former students to write off 20 per cent or \$1,000 of a federal loan—whichever is greater—for each year spent in the armed forces.

Outside the area of student aid, the Bill would authorize \$380m a year in grants and \$200m in loans to universities and colleges to make buildings more energy efficient, renovate student housing, to improve research facilities—start a new "urban university grant programme" that would give institutions federal funds to help cities tackle urban problems—change the existing Community Service Corps into an "educational outreach" programme concentrating on adults who have never been to college or university—increases the basic grant that the federal government gives all college and university libraries from the present \$4,000 to \$10,000, and set up a National Periodicals Centre as a national depository accessible to all private and public libraries.

College and university lobbyists were generally pleased with the way the House treated the Higher Education Bill, even though the version finally passed was scaled down slightly from the generous legislation approved by the House Education and Labour Committee.

The Carter administration's more modest proposals had been rejected by the House sub-committee on post-secondary education several months ago at an earlier stage in the legislative process, and administration spokesmen said even the scaled-down Bill passed by the House was too expensive.

Now the Bill goes on to the Senate, whose Education, Arts and Humanities Sub-committee is likely to start drafting its own version next month. The Senate is generally expected to approve a less costly bill, and some time next year the two houses will get together to agree a final compromise reauthorization.

Although the 50 per cent increase in higher education funds authorized by the House was regarded as quite generous by most people involved, two factors would make the Bill less extravagant in practice.

The first is simply inflation. Many Americans retain a touching faith that the country's current double-digit inflation rate is only a short-term phenomenon, but if they are wrong and inflation over the next five years averages 10 per cent, the increasing authorizations will be reduced to a standstill in real terms.

The second point to remember is that they are just authorizations, not binding commitments—they represent the maximum that could be spent. The money to be "appropriated" each year as part of the annual budget process, and Congress may choose then not to fund the programmes fully.

President Carter has announced a new Research Apprenticeships Programme (RAP) to give secondary school pupils who belong to racial minorities experience in scientific laboratories.

The goal is to give 1,000 boys and girls from Hispanic, Black and other non-white families apprenticeships next summer, helping research scientists, and to expand to 2,000 pupils a year.

The objectives are to stimulate broader interest in minority communities in careers in science and engineering and to establish links between working relationships between students and active researchers," said the White House announcement.

Blacks and other minorities are woefully under-represented in science and engineering. Scientists who want to give the RAP will need to recruit for supplementary funds to the federal agency (such as the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health or Department of Energy), from which their research grants are derived. They will have to give the RAP a good reference, which can be offered, the routes through which interested students will be sought in local or other high schools, and the special activities that will be organized to provide educational enrichment beyond the work itself.

Dr Baratz leaves professors' union after 'differences'

The American Association of University Professors has lost its general secretary Vinton Baratz, who resigned after a row about the association's policies. The AAUP Council appointed its president, Martha Friedman, as interim general secretary.

Asked for his reasons behind Dr Baratz's sudden resignation and departure, a spokeswoman for the 70,000-member organization, which is the United States' largest professional association and trade union representing college and university teachers, replied: "I can only say that there were some irreconcilable differences about the way the association should be run."

Professor Friedman has been given leave of absence by the University of Illinois, Urbana, where she has been full-time as general secretary since 1976. She had held the job for two years.

Dr Baratz had committed himself to the AAUP not to discuss the circumstances of his resignation. He said he was doing some long-delayed work in my own field, economics.

Research scheme will aid racial minority students

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The goal is to give 1,000 boys and girls from Hispanic, Black and other non-white families apprenticeships next summer, helping research scientists, and to expand to 2,000 pupils a year.

The objectives are to stimulate broader interest in minority communities in careers in science and engineering and to establish links between working relationships between students and active researchers," said the White House announcement.

Blacks and other minorities are woefully under-represented in science and engineering. Scientists who want to give the RAP will need to recruit for supplementary funds to the federal agency (such as the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health or Department of Energy), from which their research grants are derived. They will have to give the RAP a good reference, which can be offered, the routes through which interested students will be sought in local or other high schools, and the special activities that will be organized to provide educational enrichment beyond the work itself.



Hostages being released from the US embassy in Iran, where they had been held by students. Now President Carter has ordered a crackdown on Iranian students in America.

Immigration crackdown on Iranian students

from our North American editor

The 50,000 Iranian students in the United States have become the victims of an unprecedented immigration crack-down, following President Carter's order to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to deport all of them who are here illegally.

The legal questions may be answered by a court challenge to the INS regulations which the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has been preparing. The resulting lawsuit could delay the deportation of any Iranians caught by the review for months, by which time the embassy siege should (God willing) be over. Even if things are not delayed by an ACLU challenge to the whole policy, individual Iranians who want to use the legal system to challenge their own deportation orders could still stay in the United States for several more months.

No one in the INS or elsewhere knows if roughly how many of the 50,000 Iranians are supposedly studying in the United States may be liable for deportation. If minor technical violations of the immigration requirements are taken as grounds for deportation the percentage would be quite high. For example, according to one estimate, more than one-third have failed to mail their annual postcard registrations to the INS. Perhaps the Government will take a lenient view of genuine students who have made a technical mistake, but many Iranians studying in the United States are now living in fear of deportation.

President Carter's new directive is a complete reversal of his previous policy: the Administration had said that no Iranians should be deported because their lives might be in jeopardy if they were forced to leave. Iranians will still be able to ask for political asylum in the United States if they would be in danger at home, but the burden of proof is now on them.

American organisations concerned with foreign students and international education exchanges are worried that the whole affair will turn into a technical mistake, but many, particularly those from the Middle East, "It is essential that all foreign students in the United States do not become the scapegoat for United States indignation and frustration," they said in a joint statement.

Clive Cookson, North America Editor, writes in the Times Higher Education Supplement. He is based at the National Press Building, Room 641, Washington DC 20045. Telephone: (202) 638-6765.

Emory goes better with Coke

Emory University in Atlanta has been given three million shares in the Coca-Cola Company, worth more than \$100m, by the corporation's former chairman, Robert Woodruff. The gift is believed to be the biggest single philanthropic donation in American history, and it is certainly the most valuable ever received by a university.

Mr. Woodruff, who is 90, had previously given Emory gifts totalling \$110m, so he personally is the source of about \$210m of the university's \$270m endowment. Because of his generosity Emory has probably the eleventh or twelfth biggest endowment fund in the United States, and the benefaction gives the university the capacity to emerge as one of the principal institutions of higher learning in the United States in the next decade, according to Emory's president, Mr. James Laney. It is already one of the leading universities in the south, thanks to Robert Woodruff's gifts. But Emory was a natural university for him to support, since Atlanta is both its home city and that of the Coca-Cola Company. Other Coca-Cola executives have also given Emory significant gifts.

Emory, which is affiliated to the United Methodist Church, now owns a total of five million Coca-Cola shares, justifying more than ever its nickname "Coca-Cola University". Although the spokeswoman said the university had no intention of selling any of the Coca-Cola stock and reinvesting the proceeds in something else, the trustees must feel the institution's fortunes are linked uncomfortably closely with those of the soft drinks business.

In the (currently unlikely) event of Coca-Cola collapsing, two-thirds of the endowment would be wiped out. As it is, normal fluctuations in the price of Coca-Cola shares on the New York Stock Exchange are likely to lead to variations of 50 per cent or more in the paper value of the endowment in any year.

The total value of all gifts to American colleges and universities was \$3 billion in 1977/78, the last year for which figures are available, according to the Center for the Study of Private Aid to Education (CPAE). Private individuals gave about half of the total, the rest came from business corporations, foundations and religious organizations.

In both 1977/78 and 1978/79 Harvard University received most (about \$64m each year), followed by Stanford University (about \$55m).

Last month Harvard announced a five-year fund-raising drive to bring its \$250m for Harvard College, its undergraduate division is called, the university received most (about \$64m each year), followed by Stanford University (about \$55m).

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Special in Life



Queen's University, Belfast, is a tolerant, tight-knit community, a friendly island in a troubled world. People may tear themselves apart outside the elegant doors but inside the disputes are the usual academic kind.

Queen's is responsive to the special circumstances in which it finds itself and has had to face up to a large number of difficulties, but it tries to provide an island of normality in a very abnormal situation.

The university was founded in 1845 as the Queen's College, Belfast, and was granted its charter in 1908. Its main building, about a mile from the city centre, according to the university prospectus, "reflects the Victorian view that higher learning required an ornate and imposing building of historical aspect for the inculcation of well-defined areas of knowledge and of certain attitudes which were the mark of the educated man."

There are nine faculties and 758 full-time academic staff, plus 57 staff in agriculture and food science who are not financed from general University funds, and 10 full-time academic staff in the Department of Extra-Mural studies.

In 1960/1 there were 3,871 students and numbers steadily increased to reach 6,836 in 1970/71. They hovered around the 6,800 mark for three years and then went down: 6,628 in 1972/3, 6,385 in 1973/4 and 6,335 in 1974/5. They are now slowly climbing back and in 1977/8 were 6,741, which is expected to be this year's total as well. The effects of the "Troubles" are clearly seen. In 1960/1 the percentage of women students was 23 per cent and is now 35.2 per cent.

The average staff-student ratio in 1977/8 was 9.9:1 for all departments excluding clinical medicine and dentistry. The best ratio was 3:1 in the small department of history and philosophy of science and the worst was 25:1 in the department of business studies. Undergraduate figures demonstrate roughly the same curves and falls. Numbers for 1978/9 are provisionally set at 5,150 with women forming 38 per cent.

Degree courses are flexible and joint honours courses, involving many different combinations, have long been a feature. New courses are always being added. Celtic and Russian was introduced in 1975 with a German MA in special anthropology (ethnopsychology) - guided and dance. An MSc in fuel technology and power engineering includes specific reference to the fuel industries in Northern Ireland.

'Queen's has tried to make itself as attractive as possible for students'

Students who wish to take honours courses at Queen's are selected at different stages according to different faculties. In arts, the decision is to whether a student takes a general (three years) or honours (four years) degree taken at the end of his first year, with some exceptions.

In the science faculty the decision is deferred until the third year. A student can get a pass degree after three years or an honours degree after four years. Alternatively a student with good A level grades in science subjects can be exempted from the first year and do an honours degree in three years.

Different staff in the faculty of economics and social sciences, a student can take honours in three years. Social science students can take a three-year honours degree, or a three-year general degree if they prefer broader coverage.

In some faculties, such as medicine, agriculture, architecture, law and some of the engineering departments all students automatically take the honours course, although

Tolerant island in a troubled world

Sectarian differences and violence are left outside the doors of Queen's University, Belfast. Ngao Crequer reports

they may simply get a pass, without classification.

The system of general and honours degrees has a growing band of critics and the general degree is becoming more vulnerable. Although some staff value a slightly shorter course with a broader range, the student with the honours degree is likely to win the competition for jobs and research awards.

The students point out that, in arts, a person who has a lazy first year (and it may simply be that he or she is slow to adapt to a new working pattern or has shown too much enthusiasm for the non-academic pursuits of university life) will not be able to go on to honours, and spends the rest of the course regretting it.

On the other hand, if N and Y examinations or something like them were introduced, British universities would be looking to Belfast, and not the other way round.

Students are admitted to faculties rather than departments at Queen's and one of the great strengths is that students are not too pumped down by their original UCCA choices. Transfer of courses, often well into the first term, is not the routine exercise it has become in some universities. Queen's seems to have recognised more than most the uncertainty and lack of knowledge in the student's mind when he or she applies.

The most serious problem facing Queen's is the lack of diversity in the student intake. An effect of the "Troubles" has been to dry up the supply of students from the rest of Britain. Here and overseas to almost a trickle.

In 1978/9, 95.6 per cent of all Queen's students were from Northern Ireland, compared with 88.2 per cent in 1968/9. There are now fewer than 100 mainland students at Queen's. In 1967/68 there were 387 from Great Britain. The figure rose to 545 in the following year, fell slightly and then reached 500 in 1970/71. Then there was a steady decline up to this year when the provisional figure is 77.

The number of students from Eire was never as great but there has been a decline as well, from 68 in 1967/78 to 36 in 1978/79. The numbers of overseas students coming to Queen's after a high of 519 in 1968/69 fell to 26 in 1978/79, a decline of 190 mark but this year numbers went up to 218.

Although Queen's was never as cosmopolitan as some other large civic universities, staff and students are concerned that they are losing out on the geographical mix that gives university life one of its peculiar flavours. Not that the loss of this diversity can easily be quantified. Some, though not all, members of staff say that it is more difficult to get staff than it used to be. The faculties of law and medicine are still very heavily locally recruited.

Of the Northern Ireland students, a large number are from the Belfast area. Queen's has only a small number of residences in proportion to its students and many students live at home.

Although, as the vice-chancellor says, Queen's has tried to make itself as attractive as possible it seems unlikely that the numbers of mainland students will increase unless there are drastic changes in the political situa-

tion and an end to the violence.

Last year it was thought that the small rise in the numbers of overseas students might have proved to be significant. The vice-chancellor, Dr Peter Froggatt, said: "What might happen is that more and more overseas students are pushed West. There may well be a slow upturn here which could become a real trend for the next four or five years."

'We are looking for certainty in uncertainty. The quinquennium has not been replaced'

But he was speaking before the recent announcement on increased fees for overseas students.

Before that decision, Queen's felt that as other establishments were under pressure to reduce their overseas intake it might have added to the increasing applications for the university. Such speculation is now in the melting-pot because nobody knows whether overseas students will continue to come, and in what numbers.

It is interesting to look at the mix of staff at Queen's. About half come from the mainland. Queen's like most universities, is suffering from the stultifying effect of a lack of promotion prospects and fewer new posts.

But added to that common problem is the particular one of attracting good staff to a seared war-torn area. And the problems of Belfast look worse from the outside.

This is not to criticise the very high quality of academics at Queen's. But it does add life. One science lecturer complained that he could get the money for research contracts but he just could not get the people.

March 30, 1979, Dr Froggatt, past Queen's vice-chancellor, said: "The university is in a difficult position. The Northern Ireland Department of Education has been looking for a way to deal with the situation. The university is looking for a way to deal with the situation. The university is looking for a way to deal with the situation."

The review will, broadly speaking, be to the advantage of the Department of Education and to the disadvantage of the university. The review will, broadly speaking, be to the advantage of the Department of Education and to the disadvantage of the university.

According to Lord Melchett, the former Minister of State, the review body will look at the current situation of current departments of higher education and the needs of the community. The review will, broadly speaking, be to the advantage of the Department of Education and to the disadvantage of the university.

One of the hopes at Queen's is that the long-term planning and more financial security will be a reality.

Things work very informally at Queen's. Officially the university comes under the auspices of the NENI, the Northern Ireland Department of Education, but the deans consult the University Grants Committee on all relevant matters and is presumed to be its guidance. The polytechnic is also directed by the DENI so there is a feeling of competition.

The DENI, in December, had not agreed discussed with Queen's student numbers in 1981/82. What happens is that Queen's the British growth rate, based on the 1981/82 target figure and then corrects according to differences in demographic migration and projected trends.

The age participation rate differs slightly in the province, for example a rate of approximately 18.5 per cent for Northern Ireland compared with an estimated 13.5 per cent in Britain for the same year.

As neither numbers nor grants are known, and cash limits are set annually, the hand-to-mouth existence keenly felt by Queen's administrators. Dr Froggatt said: "We in the latter telling us about our grant for 1979 on July 22. It was due to start spending it on August 1."

One forms the impression that the only way of finding out how many students will arrive at Queen's is by counting them. That is an indictment not of the staff but the system under which they work.

Dr Froggatt said: "We are looking for certainty in uncertainty. The quinquennium has not been replaced. The quinquennium has not been replaced. The quinquennium has not been replaced."

Dr Froggatt is conscious of a university role in the present situation but will quickly make a distinction between the members of the university do as individuals and what the corporate body does.

He explained his ideas fully in an address to the university as an instrument of social change. A dangerous or delicate concept, at a conference of Queen's University and schools in May, 1977.

He said there were some who talked against the corporate university for not taking more specific positions. Such people were the DENI. The university is an instrument of social change. A dangerous or delicate concept, at a conference of Queen's University and schools in May, 1977.

From this they argued that the university was apathetic or disinterested. But the university is an instrument of social change. A dangerous or delicate concept, at a conference of Queen's University and schools in May, 1977.

He, clear examples of how a university can influence social change, such as the fellowships for refugees or the involvement with the professions in the development of the "educated man".

He told 1975: "What we have to do is to go to the core of the university in politics. By doing that we would only be searching. There were endless debates, individual staff and students, but what it takes. I cannot think that the main problem would do the university good at all."

Students and staff, both in the present, have taken an active interest in the university. Perhaps the most well-known was the former Bernardette Devlin, who student remarked: "Because of the Democracy movement, which started in 1974, we have been able to get on."

The Civic Universities

continued from previous page

member of the public once complained that the students had started all these troubles in Northern Ireland."

Universities which are starting to think about mature students and part-time degrees would do no harm by looking at Queen's. The five-year part-time degree course in the faculty of economics and social science, although a one-off and nearly 50 years old, offers a useful example to how it could be done.

About 30 students register each year and most are in their late 20s, 30s or 40s. Of last year's intake about a third had at least as good qualifications as ordinary full-time students, and some already had degrees.

Another third had got somewhere close, with either one A level or an HNC qualification. The other third had no qualifications beyond O level, and some not that.

All potential students are interviewed and must show some kind of ability to study. All students take examinations at the end of the year but for those in the second two categories referred to above, after reading, they have still failed their first year, they are asked to withdraw. It is made very clear right from the beginning that they will be asked to leave at the end of the first year if they are not going to make the grade.

'People... wanted to stay and see things out. They did not want to leave a sinking ship'

About 25 per cent of students drop out at the end of the first year, not all of them because of academic reasons.

About seven or eight years ago, when numbers began to fall from 50 a year, and with the advent of the Open University, there was some pressure to abandon the course. But this was resisted by Professor R. C. D. Black, head of the department of economic and social history.

He said: "If we had given up, as people wanted us to, it would have been like selling your shares at the bottom of the market. I championed keeping the course. We were getting good students. Motivation was very high. About 50 per cent of the students were paying their own fees."

There are chairs in UK universities occupied by people who were on our part-time course. I had a feeling that part-time education was going to be a thing of the future.

"Of course there have been problems but they are all soluble. Some people have moved and suspended their enrolment but this is not a serious difficulty. Our experience shows that you can get round all of the problems."

One of the issues facing Queen's under the last Government which caused concern in many quarters was the department's lengthy and painstaking attempt to introduce comprehensive education in the province. In Northern Ireland there is the added problem of religious segregation of schools and a feeling that education is being used as an attempt to solve the province's wider political and social differences.

In a statistically unreliable but nevertheless interesting straw poll of about a dozen members of the Association of University Teachers, conducted by The TES last December, not one person was in favour of the department's proposals. Although a minority stressed they were not against comprehensive per se, simply the Labour Government's way of going about it, feeling against the whole idea was strong and firmly opposed.

The university has made no statement on comprehensive education, but made it clear in its response to the Consultative Document

on Reorganisation of Secondary Education in Northern Ireland that it was concerned to prevent a reduction in the attainment of more able pupils. If fewer subjects were available at sixth form level, or study of some subjects at school started later than it does now, the university might have to add a year on to the length of degree courses to maintain standards.

It expressed concern about the effects of mixed ability classes on more able pupils. It notes that the assumption is made that the present GCSE examination system is likely to stay, which may not prove to be so; it wants more evidence from Britain about the workings of its comprehensive system.

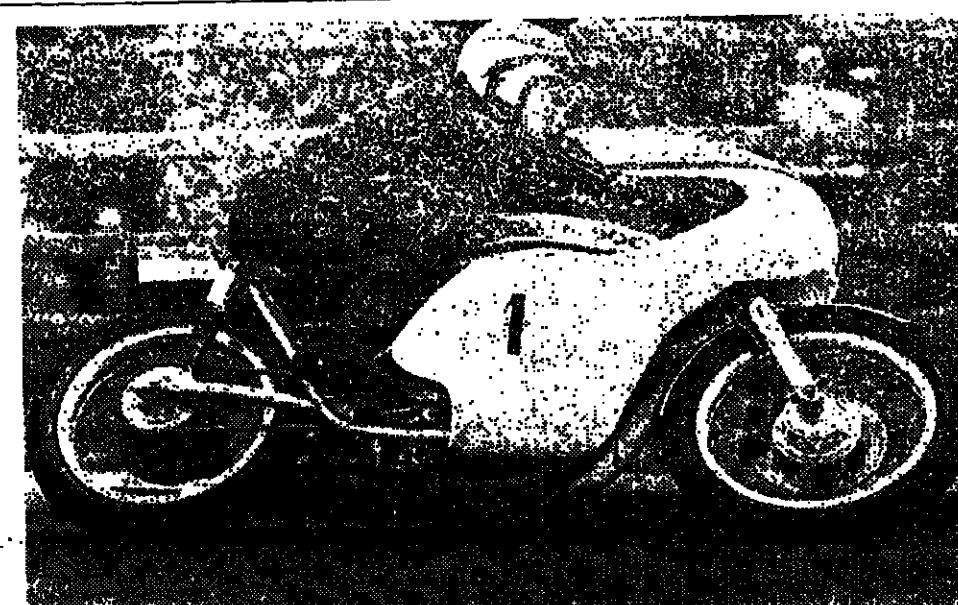
Comprehensive education is still a live issue in Northern Ireland. With the change in government there is no compulsion on local authorities to reduce schemes. It is up to the individual education and library boards. The Southern Board has gone some way with its plans and the North West is believed still to be in favour. Others are likely to be against. The pro-comprehensive lobby feels that the momentum has been lost but is trying to maintain interest.

Clearly Queen's joins a long list of institutions which would need to be reassured if the path is to be cleared of thorns. Graduate unemployment is slightly worse at Queen's than in the rest of the United Kingdom. In 1976/77 the Queen's graduate unemployment figure was 8.1 per cent, compared with the United Kingdom 5.6 per cent, although the United Kingdom figure has a much higher rate of "unknowns".

Of the graduates known to have obtained employment in the United Kingdom, 87.4 per cent of them got jobs in Northern Ireland. Mr D. R. Clifford, the appointments officer, said: "We have never felt that people had to go across the water to get jobs. In the height of the emergency they wanted to stay and see things out. They did not want to leave a sinking ship."

He has, of course, difficulties not faced by his colleagues on the mainland, in attracting visiting employers. They average 80 a year compared with more than 300 at, say, Manchester University. Firms on the mainland do not usually ask him to visit them and rarely pay his travel costs.

A severe blow to employment prospects has been the reduction in the number of grants allocated for postgraduate teacher training. In 1977 Lord Melchett said that from 1978 arrangements will provide for awards to be made only to students admitted to courses in Great Britain which are not available in Northern Ireland AND where there is a need in Northern Ireland



Queen's 500cc motorcycle, developed in the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering.

for teachers who take such courses. In fact a loophole in the regulations enabled a number of Northern Ireland students to apply for mandatory teacher training grants from English and Welsh local authorities but the regulations were tightened up in January 1979, to effectively restrict applications for grants/places to the province.

According to Queen's, next to no such awards as defined above were made by the Northern Ireland Department of Education for 1978/79 and the same looks likely for 1979/80.

In 1971/72 317 Northern Ireland graduates went into teaching or teacher training but in 1976/77 the figure was 137. There will be the severest competition for the 140 or so places in the province.

Belfast is not the place to go for a hectic social life. There are two main theatres, a number of cinemas and halls and innumerable public houses. But attempts to revive social, cultural and artistic life seem to emanate from Queen's.

The Belfast Festival, university-based, which celebrated its 15th year in 1978, gets bigger and, by all accounts, better every year. Although it does not have the universal recognition, and the great financial sponsorship of the Edinburgh Festival, its success is still remarkable.

Queen's also has the only full-time university-based film theatre in the British Isles, and an appeal has been launched for a university theatre.

Most of the students at Queen's come with a conscious desire not to get involved with any kind of political activity. They prefer to leave the politics behind them, wherever they come from.

After Film Society, the biggest student group is Christian Union. There are relatively few student political organizations and those that there are have small memberships. Possibly the biggest of these is the Democratic Unionist Party, with about 14 active members.

The union itself thrives and sabbatical elections have had turnouts of up to 50 per cent, high by UK standards. Demonstrations, occupations and other forms of direct action would have no support among the students of Queen's. The current union leadership finds that charm and diplomacy, both with their own membership and the university authorities are every bit as effective as the usual student weapons.

Accommodation is one of the student's problems. The university has just over 1,600 places available in halls, houses or apartments although a new block of residences is on the way. The situation is made more difficult because many polytechnic students live in the Queen's area, and compete for the same private sector accommodation.

About 50 per cent of students live at home, but this can prove difficult for some students if it means having to travel from one side of the city to another, traversing both Protestant and Catholic areas.

Officially, anyone who lives within 20 miles of the university gets a maintenance grant. The lower rate, however, the university and the education authorities recognize that it may be necessary or desirable for a student not to live at home and therefore should get a higher grant.

A student can make a case out to the university and there are good grounds for believing that he should not have to live at home. The university will tell the education authority, without giving away the reasons, and the authority will pay the higher grant.

Queen's students face not only the typical problems of a shrinking private sector, but the loss of houses due to bomb damage or decay and dereliction.

President Tom Lynch said: "The university owns some houses which are left to rot. They could be let to students at a low rent. Private sector rents are soaring and students have to pay a deposit before they can use any electricity."

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A student housing association, which 'look at the special needs of students for accommodation, has recently been formed, but it is estimated that it will be 10 years before it begins to have an impact.

From the bricked-up terraces and scarred walls of Belfast, the conservationists are trying to reclaim the city and maintain as much as they can. Buildings which would not normally be listed in London stand a much greater chance of being so in Belfast.

The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society was formed in 1967 and drew up a list of buildings of architectural importance at Queen's, but it is constantly being revised. One hundred and twenty-eight more buildings are listed. It places a terrible burden on the university if a bomb-damaged building has to be restored to its previous condition because it was listed.

In one case a privately rented house owned by the university was blown up in 1973. The university repaired it and it was blown up again in 1974. The university wanted to demolish it as it considered the house unsafe, but permission was refused.

Queen's can have a very positive part to play in trying to alleviate some of the effects of the "Troubles".

The medical and dental schools, in conjunction with the teaching hospitals, have been able to carry out some extremely advanced work in treating bomb injuries. Research into smashed knee-joints and new plates for fractured jaws will eventually help sufferers all over the world.

'I think we are much closer to industry because we are only just down the road'

The dean of the medical school, Professor I. C. Roddie, is very modest about the achievements that have been made and points to the appalling toll of road accidents in the province as another reason for the necessary excellence of health skills.

Queen's medical school has been able to carry out new studies in traumatic surgery. In conventional war a person would be hit by a bullet. But in Belfast many of the injuries are caused by blunt instruments such as stones.

The only illnesses they see few of are mental ones. Northern Ireland has the lowest incidence of psychiatric illness in the United Kingdom.

Queen's has also attracted a great deal of research money to study the Northern Ireland situation, including a recent grant of half a million dollars to study conflict in Ireland.

It feels a responsibility to the region, both because of its size and its aggregation of skills, that an English university would not possess.

Professor Bernard Crossland, head of the department of mechanical and industrial engineering, says: "I think we are much closer to industry, because we are only just down the road."

He is particularly proud of the Low Cost Automation Centre, an advisory service operated by the university and supported by the Department of Industry, and the Northern Ireland Department of Commerce.

The centre provides a variety of services, essentially aimed at the small firm. It gives practical advice and assistance on the use of low cost automation and lists suppliers of specialist equipment.

Selection of equipment and systems, which may be of potential use to a small firm, is on permanent display, and may be borrowed for short-term evaluation.

Businesses can also bring particular production problems to the centre for the university staff to try to solve. The centre can design, manufacture and install specialist equipment, but a charge is being made.

One local company made a 40 per cent saving in its costs after the installation of two quality control machines which were designed and made by the centre, which also runs short experience courses for staff.

Some of the help given by the university to local firms began almost by accident. A videotape was damaged. It could be repaired only "across the road" in a business and so a videotape it would be damaged again in transit.

University staff repaired it themselves and found that this kind of service was also useful to industry. There was a danger at one time that this kind of work was becoming too much like a business and so a company was formed and then hired off.

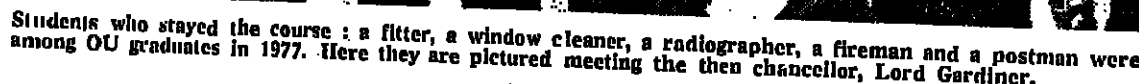
Professor W. Lewis Warren, head of the modern history department, says one of the problems is that Queen's is introverted. "About eight years ago, before the 'troubles' began, there were about 20-25 foreign nationalities in the university. Now it is very difficult to find a foreigner in the English face." Only one member of the department has left in the past 20 years.

But one of the things that strikes him is the remarkable loyalty of staff and students to the institutions. The university does show that it is perfectly capable of coming together. This is the best of all.

Undergraduates at work in the physics teaching laboratory.

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John C. 196



Naomi McIntosh, Professor of Applied Social Research at the OU looks back on a decade that made the sceptics swallow their words.



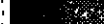
life has needed several years for
to be able to see the present of
udent progress and graduation.
The first intake was clearly over-
sight in the motivation and sup-
port. Butakes are studying more
away and graduating at lower
rates. The first intake was clearly

are available to students in their homes, either through the mail or the printed word, some experiential ways (tapes etc.) or even the tuition fee (radio or TV) on payment of the tuition fee.

A variety of other teaching aids are available, some at a direct cost, for example summer schools, and some which are travel to transform it a more normal part of the curriculum. It is a matter of how to use these to the advantage of the students to give which of these they themselves wish to use. There is an increasing tendency to recognise in the training of students a resource by which to use the summer schools.



This question is already answered by the fact that, of the 115 currently available undergraduate programs, fewer than 200 students take all of the courses have fewer than 200 students. Except in limited cases, one or two other large cities effectively impossible for students to have reasonable access to the



The balance has clearly shifted too far, and as courses are redesigned, students and academics continue to insist on a large number of population, socialist courses, that will pay, to accept that these should be made up of different, more flexible, cheaper ways.

I personally believe that if it is certain for the OU to stick by its original mission of providing distance teaching, and plan its course creatively, taking account of the



... Every new form of human communication will be examined to see how it can be used to raise and broaden the level of human understanding.

It is currently fashionable in the U.S. to discourage the broadcasting

clement, partly as it costs a lot more now comprises more than one-fifth of the university's teaching budget and the OU has no control over the BBC's bill), and partly since the BBC's many courses, student comment seems to be dropping. I don't believe this knocking is misguided and that the partnership with the BBC has been a critical factor in making the OU what is known, established and accessible to the vast majority of students.

real alternative which must be considered seriously, I accept that there will be some courses, particularly in science, with small populations where a moving video signal is necessary. These can exceptionally be given air time if a case is made. Provided we can afford it, the greater use of video cassettes for small population courses has to be made.

What is clear is that with the decision to have ITV 2 rather than

Although many people expected to and suggested it should, the Open University did not initially set out to rewrite the curriculum of higher education. As Norman Birnbaum so aptly put it, "The Open University has begun with a fairly straightforward notion of subject matter, which assumes that students have much to learn from an intact cultural tradition."

But it has set out to make the subject matter much more vivid and explicitly valuable than has hitherto. It has determined to open up to the public some much of

has hitherto gone on in private colleges, and thereby demystified. And it has set itself high intellectual, design and production standards in the process.

However, the Open University, in the business of the provision of mass higher education, and [a use] both the mass media and other media to aid it in the task. The reason for this is the obvious one that though the media are cheap, they become cheap when used in large numbers. They are

The argument goes like this: Adult disadvantaged students should not be assessed once and all through one examination. Continuous assessment is much fairer. Once continuous assessment forms part of the grade which makes credit it must be equitable and valid across all students. This must therefore mark accordingly.

Nationally agreed guidelines do not allow space for individual tu

One much vaunted benefit of QU is the way in which the academic content is put together, the best in a synergistic way—a team cooperates to make high quality materials which are far more than the sum of the individual parts. Worst, working in course teams is difficult and wearing, and sometimes threatening, task. Academics are being asked to play their part in a new way, by writing rather

Increasingly, courses are taking three years to make current remake of the new science foundation course is due in 1982. The main content then to last for several years. Specialists courses are often written by one or two academics either on their own or with external consultants.

What we have got totally wrong is the division of labour between



It is no wonder that there is less interest in improving or enhancing postsecondary education than there is in making new ones. The glory attaches to the new course. As we move towards the completion of the course profile the teaching of courses must assume a more important role, and the teachers must become more involved in it as "a central teaching team" on a continuing basis if they are not to be increasingly divorced from students. Tutoring a course you have written has never been built into the workload, and not increasingly so. We must even get better at the schools. This needs to change. The Open University has had to

The problems involved in managing a university which also has to be a production plant, mail order and publishing house, and research center, are magnified a hundred times. One problem is the continued confusion between using democracy to determine policy and using democracy as a method of making day-to-day management decisions. It is no secret that Walter Perry feels that a Senate of more than 700

Walter Perry brought to the task of being the first vice-chancellor a unusual combination of courage and intellectual and entrepreneurial ability. The task of setting up such an institution required all these



lack of specialist courses. Thus while the British Psychological Society has agreed to the use of approved courses for recognition, little progress has been made with the Council for Engineering Institutions in the engineering field. In the United States, as in one nation, this has recently led to the fourth channel, the luxury of sterilising large chunks of BSC material and population courses will not be acceptable. Neither will ITV 2 be particularly interested in our more esoteric offerings. They, as the BBC, are more interested in the more commercially viable education, the education of adults, and students to develop new areas beyond those laid down in the text and recommended reading. Educationally disadvantaged students may have other life experience which they could bring to their studies to advantage, if admitted, and individuals take account of it. Disadvantaged students above all grow fast, and inevitably has suffered from growing pains. It is often described as a vast bureaucracy, fossilized, impossible to change. It is again here a victim of its own ideas. It is axiomatic that everybody should be able to participate in decision-making. The

We did not persist in pursuing the model of the face-to-face tutorial, although it is no longer applicable." We ought, she said, to scrap the idea of a teaching device (such as telephone tutorials) created from the start. She found herself this year tutoring all the students on a third level course for the whole of Northern Ireland as well as Wales. She started with eight students there and was now down to four and one.

"It is not just in the provision of face-to-face tuition that we have not been prepared enough to

use. But academics seem unable to get over the "not invented here syndrome." It is to be hoped that this week's conference promotes the possibility of collaboration in course production and sharing. We can't afford to let such large investments go to waste."

3. "We are open as to methods. We start in dependence on, and in grateful partnership with, the ERC. But already the development of technology is marching on and I believe long before long actual broadcasting will form only a small part of the university's output."

4. We are open, finally, to ideas. It has been said that there are two aspects to education, both necessary. One regards the individual human mind as a vessel to be filled by knowledge, which is to be secured as much as it will hold of the knowledge and experience by which human society lives and moves. This is the Martha of education—and we shall have plenty of these tasks to perform. But the other regard is to set alight and blown with the divine affluat. That also we take as our ambition . . .

We need to have a degree which is recognized outside as being of a common standard and as good as others degrees of the same rank. We must find them if it is to play the grade game and stick to the recommended text. There are also student stories of tutors who are known to discourage independent study initiatives and mark people down if they dissent too much from the text. The new social science foundation course is being planned as an integrated whole with no set books or recommended reading to speak of at all.

The labyrinthine complexity of the committee structure and the amount of paper this produces are so massive that it takes to make decisions which involve consultation and Senate approval runs into years, not months.

Ordinary universities fail to find a solution to the problem of how to govern efficiently and democratically.

change. The "well-proven" model developed for foundation courses carefully developed beautifully designed texts, regular television and radio, reasonably frequent face-to-face tuition, compulsory summer schools—continued to be applied until very recently to all courses irrespective of content, and student numbers. The investment and set-up cost of writing, designing and type-setting course programmes, or making television programmes, is the same whether you have 500 students or 20,000 students. There are 200, 2,000 or 20,000 students.

The balance has clearly shifted too far, and as courses are remade if students and academics continue to insist on a large number of small, population, specialist courses, they will have to accept that these should be made different, more flexible and changeable.

I personally believe that it is important for the OU to stick by its original mission of providing distance teaching, and plan each course creatively, taking account of

element, partly as it costs a lot (it now comprises more than one-fifth of the university's teaching budget) and the OU has no control over the BBC's bill), and partly since on many courses, particularly computing, there is a danger of dropping it because this knowledge is misguided, and that the partnership with the BBC has been a critical factor in making the OU well known, established and accessible to the vast majority of the

has hitherto gone on in private; in cloisters and thereby demystify it. And it has set itself high intellectual, design and production standards in the process.

At the Open University, in the business of the provision of mass higher education, and is using both the mass media and other methods to aid it in the task. The reason for this is the obvious one that though the media are not cheap, they become cheaper when used on a large scale.

What we have got totally wrong is that division of labour between lecturing, and are having to do it in a very public way.

Increasingly, courses are now taking three years to make the classic foundation course due in 1982. The main content then has to last for several years. More specialists courses are often mainly written by one or two academics either on their own or with external consultants.

What we have got totally wrong is that division of labour between lecturing, and are having to do it in a very public way.

Continued on page 14

Continued on page 14

Beware the bandwagons which anyone can join where no qualifications

Small is stupid

At a time when most of the advanced countries of the world have had very little economic growth for about five years, and when the prospects for renewed growth are very dim, it is appropriate to look back at the anti-growth movement which emerged in the late 1960s and reached a climax in the early 1970s.

Doubts as to the desirability, or feasibility, of continued economic growth have, of course, been expressed by various writers for a century or more, notably by John Stuart Mill. But in modern times the first serious shot in the bandwagon was fired by Ed Mishan, in his book *The Costs of Economic Growth* (1967). As one of the book's reviewers, Lord Robbins, said of it at the time, it was undoubtedly highly polemical.

From the point of view of the quality, clarity and originality of the ideas put forward, Mishan's book still towers far above the pale imitations which proliferated as the anti-growth bandwagon got rolling in the early 1970s. My own review in the book was generally favourable, though with reservations, and my reservations increased as time went by and the quality of the arguments against growth, deployed by a succession of poor-man's Mishans, sank to a record low level. I think that Mishan's basic position was mistaken, but I recognize that he raised serious issues, which deserved a serious reply.

The same could hardly be said of the book which really set the anti-growth wagon on its way, namely the first report to the Club of Rome, *The Limits to Growth*, by D. Meadows and others. Mishan's book was clearly the expression of passionate concern with the quality of modern life, a discontent which obviously reflected personal and deep convictions which were entirely his credit. But *The Limits to Growth* was so full of blatant error and distortion of well-known facts

Wilfred Beckerman discusses the Club of Rome and other criticism of economic growth in the first of an occasional series on influential pressure groups

that it is impossible to take an equally charitable view of it. Nor was its success—wide spread influence—due to its being an expression of some admirable—let alone correct—idea. On the contrary, what impressed large sections of the public was that its predictions of inevitable catastrophe (through resource exhaustion, over-population relative to food supplies, and in quality, clarity and originality of the ideas put forward, Mishan's book still towers far above the pale imitations which proliferated as the anti-growth bandwagon got rolling in the early 1970s. My own review in the book was generally favourable, though with reservations, and my reservations increased as time went by and the quality of the arguments against growth, deployed by a succession of poor-man's Mishans, sank to a record low level. I think that Mishan's basic position was mistaken, but I recognize that he raised serious issues, which deserved a serious reply.

One exception to the general reaction, however, was an article in *The Times*—not by me— which said that the book "has an unsatisfactory air of spurious scholarship throughout. It could be described as an elaborate satire and is pseudo-science at its worst". Unfortunately, the general public did not realize that, in the words of Lord (then Sir Eric) Ashby, "if you feed doom-laden assumptions into computers it is not surprising that they predict doom". In effect, the Club of Rome report did what it said it would do: it assumed that all "bads" such as pollution, demand for food and raw materials, and so on, would increase exponentially for ever and

ever, and all "goods", such as techniques to reduce pollution per unit of output, or supplies of food and raw materials, could only increase by finite amounts. Clearly, however, generous are these finite amounts, it does not need a computer to show that, one day, on these assumptions, the "bads" must exceed the "goods". Indeed, the report did not even follow out the logic of its own computer when these assumptions were inconvenient. For example, when it is clear that, given the assumptions, even zero growth will, of course, not prevent the world from running out of resources some day, the diagram showing the computer printout is cut off at the awkward point where the result would have been too obvious.

Fortunately, the glaring weaknesses, factual errors and mistaken methodology of the report were soon exposed by numerous authoritative bodies and individual experts, including some eminent scientists. Furthermore, at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, at Stockholm, the Third World rightly made it plain that slow growth would be disastrous for them, and also to the effects of slow growth in the advanced countries. This also reduced the popular appeal of the slow growth movement.

Nevertheless, the bandwagon could not be halted all that easily, as it seemed to have something in it for everybody. This included many scientists, such as those who, for obvious psychological reasons, felt a compulsion to demonstrate that they did as much social conscience as everybody else and were profoundly concerned with the fate of mankind, and those scientists who found the movement an opportunity to re-tune their status as the gurus of modern society. It also included the middle classes, many of whom felt that they are particularly badly hit by economic growth, which undoubtedly eliminates many of their privileges.

It included also the radical youth, who saw in the movement a convenient stick with which to attack the non-debating materialism of modern capitalism and subservience to the profit motive. As well as a wonderful ego trip on which the middle classes—they could demonstrate their moral fibre, aesthetic sensibilities and great idealism and concern for the problems of distant generations, even if some of them would not go out of their way to help a blind man cross the road. Finally, the mass media had a wonderful time making the blood accounts of the latest ecological mishap to scare story.

It was a bandwagon which anyone could join. No special



knowledge was required—it was enough to know about the Minamata disaster in Japan and to have absorbed some misinformation about the demise of the bald-headed eagle—although a talent for passionate rhetoric demonstrating the purity of one's soul was also a help. In short,

no more qualifications were needed than are needed to join in a debate in the House of Commons. A further push to the bandwagon was given in 1973 by the book *Small is Beautiful*. This book, the subtitle of which was "a study of the economics as if people mattered",

was written by a professional economist, the late E. F. Schumacher. Few professional economists reading it, however, would recognize Schumacher's occasional references to the content and assumptions of economics as having any relation to reality. His references, for example, to the economist's pursuit of maximization of economic growth, or denial of any "qualitative difference between mindless atoms and men made in the Image of God", or failure to distinguish between renewable and non-renewable resources, or valuation of means above ends, nor merely showed an inexcusable ignorance of the literature of economics but was also a travesty of the part the subject which the author ought to have known.

Like Mishan, however, Schumacher was clearly inspired by a very personal sense of discontent—if not despair—which, like many people, he tried to project on to the outside world. Unlike Mishan's book, however, Schumacher's is coloured by a mysticism which seems to have clouded his thought, as when he writes that "we still have to learn how to live peacefully, not only with our fellow men but also with nature and, above all, with those Higher Powers which have made nature and have made us...".

It was not an account of philosophical doubts, however, that the steam began to go out of the anti-growth movement a few years ago. This was partly the result of the increasing recognition of the gross errors in the Club of Rome position, and partly the result of its obvious unpalatable implications both for the Third World and for democratic institutions in such countries where democratic institutions still survive. Indeed, the Club of Rome soon shifted its ground. First, it commissioned a report by Mesarovic and Pestel, *Mankind at the Turning Point*, which confessed that the first report had, perhaps, been open to objection in terms of its exaggeration, on to a world-wide basis. In short, the characteristic of the anti-growth philosophy has been that society's welfare, or happiness, can be ensured not by expanding the extent to which our needs are satisfied but by reducing our needs.

Whether one regards this as a defeatist and petty view of man or a noble, inspiring insight into the true nature of happiness, is no doubt largely a matter of temperament. But at least it does raise a philosophical issue which is worth considering, namely the extent to which welfare is a matter of the satisfaction of needs which are given, as distinct from the satisfaction of needs which may vary. For example, in the context of utilitarianism, are utilities, the sum of which is to be maximized, conceived of as being solely in terms of the satisfaction of given needs, or could

they be maximized by increasing needs as well, and hence increasing the scope for their satisfaction? Or, to put it another way, is welfare simply a matter of reducing "pains" (e.g. of unsatisfied needs), in which case it could be desirable to concentrate on reducing needs, or could it also be a positive matter of expanding man's needs provided that the level of need-satisfaction is also raised to some extent?

Furthermore, it may well be that certain "needs" add to man's welfare, irrespective of how far they can be satisfied, such as the need for education, or human contact, or aesthetic enjoyments, or even for religion. One might even go further and adopt the view, of which Nietzsche was the outstanding advocate, that the "good life" is the active life of those who do not deny their needs and impulses but, instead, try to express them in a creative manner.

Of course, the choice between the opposing schools of thought may depend on which needs one is talking about, the satisfaction of which springs from the tendency either to regard all needs as bad, or to make untenable distinctions between "natural" needs and "artificial" needs.

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But, in shifting to safer ground, they paid the price of not saying anything which was not already common knowledge. Numerous studies of food and agriculture trends had already shown that world food supplies had long been expanding faster than world population, even during the post-war period when the populations of many developing

countries had increased particularly rapidly, but that there were big changes in the regional balances of food supplies relative to demands. The less developed countries which, in pre-war times, had tended to run food surpluses, were becoming increasingly dependent on the rising surpluses of North America and other relatively advanced countries.

In the end, the Club of Rome gave up the struggle to maintain its earlier position and has abandoned its advocacy of zero growth and shifted to the safer issue of the problems of the Third World, which are not only genuine but which are also so glaring that no computerized peeps into the future are required in order to identify their existence.

In retrospect, the hysteria which accompanied the early days of the anti-growth movement probably did some harm. For example, associated with it were some excessive conservationist reactions which had most unfortunate results. In Ceylon, for example, where malaria had been almost entirely eradicated by the use of DDT, the banning of DDT led to a rapid rise in the malaria death rate. In Sweden, DDT had to be quickly re-introduced when insects started to destroy forests.

One typical unpleasant effect was the movement, in Britain, to encourage school children to monitor pollution levels in their local rivers and lakes, for although there have been no cases of fatal illness from water pollution in Britain for more than 50 years, every year more than 100 children are drowned playing in or near water. Unfortunately a campaign to teach all children to swim did not appear sufficiently novel and exciting to the pressure groups whose activities were inspired by such tender concern to provide all fish with beautifully clean water to swim in.

On the other hand, however, dramatized and factually inaccurate were many of its statements, the exaggerated claims of its associated conservationist and ecologist pressure groups, probably did have some beneficial effects. The main mistake of the movement was to identify the misuse of the environment and other undesirable features of the way our society misallocates resources, with the rate of economic growth. In fact, it is a plain misallocation of resources of a kind which is inevitable in a free market system, and the absence of special government measures to rectify them, at any point in time, and irrespective of the growth rate.

If growth were to stop tomorrow (in Britain it has already stopped,

of course), this would not prevent excessive emissions of carbon monoxide from automobile exhausts, or of smoke and sulphur dioxide from various production and consumption activities, such as burning coal in small domestic hearths which would have been dead to the heart of Schumacher, instead of in large electricity generating plants, removed from urban areas and equipped with special "scrubbing" and other pollution removal facilities. Indeed, much of the improvement in the environment which has taken place in Britain and in a few other countries in the past decade or more has been the result of economic growth with its accompanying shift in the hierarchy of social objectives in favour of less immediate and pressing needs, and its increased capacity to pay to achieve these objectives.

But if growth was not the culprit, the fact remained that, in the absence of special measures, the environment would be damaged beyond the socially acceptable amount. The anti-growth movement did, at least, draw public attention to the danger that, at any moment resources could be misallocated in the presence of external effects, notably in the form of environmental pollution. This had always been known to economists, of course, who had contributed most to the analysis of these effects, but it took the anti-growth movement and hysterical reactions to bring it home to the public and the authorities.

Secondly, a particularly important case of environmental impact is the problem of nuclear power. Apart from the risk of accidents in nuclear power plants—which the recent Three Mile Island incident is a timely reminder—there is the more serious problem of the disposal of large amounts of highly radioactive nuclear wastes. For there is the possibility that the leaking of these wastes could lead to environmental catastrophe in the distant future.

This, too, raises not only important economic issues in the theory of public choice (prompting the Nobel laureate Kenneth Arrow to devote a lot of attention to this particular application of the theory of decision making under conditions of uncertainty), but also important philosophical issues concerning society's responsibility for future generations. It has been widely accepted in the economics literature that the practice by which individuals attach less satisfaction to later enjoyments than to equal current enjoyments is somehow "irrational". As the late Sir Roy Harrod put it, pure time preference (which expresses this preference for present over future consumptions) is "a polite expression for rapacity and the conquest of reason by passion".

Nevertheless, some valid grounds for such a discounting of future benefits or costs are believed to exist on account of risk. But the usual calculus of risk is probably of little help when one is faced with small domestic hearths which would have been dead to the heart of Schumacher, instead of in large electricity generating plants, removed from urban areas and equipped with special "scrubbing" and other pollution removal facilities. Indeed, much of the improvement in the environment which has taken place in Britain and in a few other countries in the past decade or more has been the result of economic growth with its accompanying shift in the hierarchy of social objectives in favour of less immediate and pressing needs, and its increased capacity to pay to achieve these objectives.

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The author is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

The OU celebrates its first decade

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skills, and he did it consummately well—the task of running a stable or declining state is much less attractive and interesting, and many universities are not finding it easy to persuade people that the vice-chancellor's bed of nails is an attractive one. The OU is no exception, and the task is even more daunting, while the financial climate is anything more bleak than for other universities.

To manage creatively in a time of "growth", or perhaps of "no growth", with little staff mobility, central academics came

lity, and few opportunities for promotion, requires imagination and courage. Development, to create a climate of continuing education in a time of no growth is very difficult. Perry, as indeed many of us, saw the continuing education just the challenge required to keep the Open University open. Many members of Senate are more ambivalent about it. They pay lip-service to it, but do not want it to be done at the expense of their courses or their research budgets. Nor do they want other people making courses which look as if they are in the same subject area, but are less rigorous and not worthy of a university. Many academics are as anxious to maintain parity of esteem with other universities as the students are.

While many staff did come out of a broader tradition of the education of adults, for very good reasons, the growth minus, with little staff mobility, central academics came

from conventional universities. It is by no means clear that they are the most appropriate people to develop the broader provision required by continuing education. While the learning sciences we have developed are obviously relevant, many others could well be much better at producing the content.

The use of the world legacy of developing continuing education in the OU have been understood by outsiders, but is little understood by academics inside. In fact, the delegation has been made to me. I still believe that it would be better to face up to the challenge of setting up a sister institution, sharing common systems but with a broader mission which will then not always be seen as competing for increasingly scarce resources.

Almost certainly continuing edu-

cation will be the major area of new development over the next decade or so. At the same time, as other universities become increasingly interested in mature students (Model B and all that), the OU may become increasingly vulnerable to what has until now been its major territory.

It is obvious that the university is not yet clear about the precise nature of its contribution towards continuing education. It is equally obvious that there is no guarantee that the country at large has the political will or the economic resources to move rapidly towards it. Indeed, it is not a good time to be alive in adult education. It requires a major act of faith to look over the valley of tribulation to the promised land of the late 1980s when continuing education for adults should be a reality, and not a dream.

It will be obvious that I have chosen not to write complacently. The success of the OU has been great. Over the past year there have been 350,000 people applying, 30,000 registering and by the end of the year the number of graduates will be 40,000. Current students, both undergraduate and associate, number 77,000. Course units are booked to approach the four million mark.

The words written about the OU this year run into hundreds of thousands, and most of them are congratulatory. Those of us who worked together in the OU and the past 10 years have deemed it a privilege to be there. We know what we have done well, and we know what we have not been able to do. We are fiercely proud of our success, and fiercely critical of our failures. I am sure that the books will be as challenging and as rewarding as the first.

by Bill Williams

The recent attention given to the plight of low paid workers reminds me that they are by no means confined to local government or hospitals. They occur in all walks of life, wherever there is a group without muscle, or a group which has "motivation" rather than the purely financial.

One such group in the academic world is the external examiners: no muscle and primarily concerned with its academic function, rather than with its rate of pay. I have elsewhere written on the subject of external examining and in so doing became very conscious of the great variety of practices of a very arbitrary nature by which different institutions fix fees on the candidate, the number of candidates for examination.

Should all examiners have the same basic fee or, if in some cases, the work undertaken relates mainly to marking, would a capitation fee be more equitable and most practicable to recommend a formula based on the following stages in the examination: a basic fee plus a capitation fee for each candidate according to the number of candidates for examination.

During 1977/8 a group at the University of Leeds made a serious attempt to introduce some sensible order into its arrangements. On the basis of the knowledge and experience of its members, the group (of which I was not a member) agreed that the proportion of time spent on each of the following stages in both Arts and Science, was approximately: setting out papers, 5 per cent; attendance at meetings, 5 per cent; 15-20 per cent; marking, 75-80 per cent.

After considering various alternatives it was decided that it would be both most equitable and most practicable to recommend a formula based on the following stages in the examination: a basic fee plus a capitation fee for each candidate according to the number of candidates for examination.

Discussions then turned to how payment should be apportioned for the marking part of the job. It was agreed that as the duties of an external examiner comprised mainly comparing the performance of students taking examinations, advising

on which candidates had failed, which candidates should be awarded each class of honours, the fee should be based on the number of candidates presenting themselves for the final examination (or, in the cases of departments where the final examination was divided into two parts, taken at the end of the penultimate and final years, on the average of the numbers in those two years).

It was also necessary to decide how to divide the amount of work undertaken by one external examiner by imposing a maximum fee or, as an alternative, to introduce a scale of capitation fees which reduced as the number of candidates increased, the proper amount of the professional average and the basic fee at one eighth of the maximum fee, each rounded to the nearest £5.

For the benefit of those not familiar with the terminology, the amount of work undertaken by one external examiner by imposing a maximum fee or, as an alternative, to introduce a scale of capitation fees which reduced as the number of candidates increased, the proper amount of the professional average and the basic fee at one eighth of the maximum fee, each rounded to the nearest £5.

figures! However the reaction to my specific suggestions—something needs to be done to remove or reduce the present inequities. Comparing notes with my colleagues—you will have gathered that I am a mercenary character—disclosed many inexplicable, often large differences in fees; on one occasion one polytechnic was paying six times as much as another for essentially the same services.

I have been offered twice as much by one institution as another for equivalent examinations. On one occasion I was offered a £150 fee; when I protested that it should be at least £250 that improved figure was agreed almost instantly. No one knows what the proper levels are—there are no proper levels—and colleagues are often hesitant and sometimes apologetic when making approaches.

What makes the situation so chaotic and the problem so intractable is that it is impossible to identify any authority willing or able to deal with it. At best it will cost you money, and at worst it will make you a bit of enemies. Nonetheless it remains a real problem, as real as that of any other group of underpaid workers. Is this not a matter on which the UGC and the CNA might do something and issue a guide to their constituents? Or, better, perhaps, the AUT and NATFHE?

The author is director of combined studies in the Faculty of Science at Leeds University.



Figure 1. Open University applicants from 1970 to 1978.

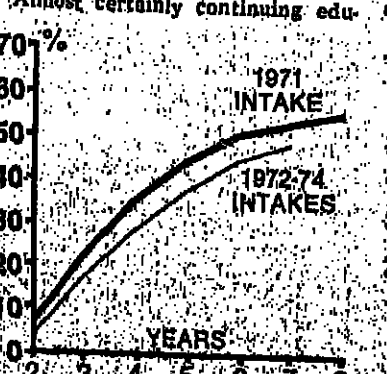


Figure 2. The cumulative proportions of Open University students graduating.

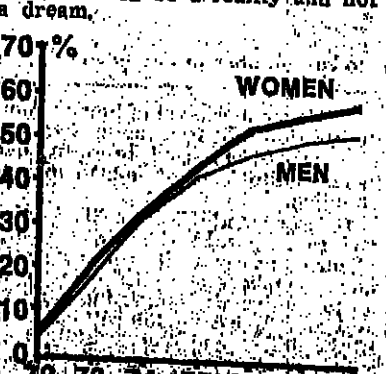


Figure 3. The cumulative proportions of men and women from the 1971 intake graduating.

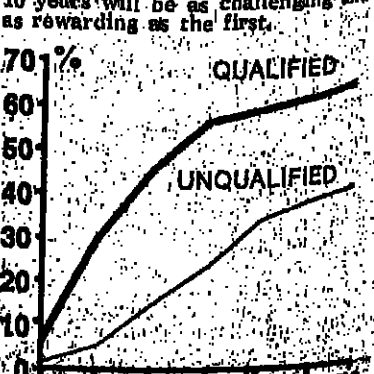


Figure 4. The cumulative proportions of "qualified" and "unqualified" Open University students from the 1971 intake graduating.

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Union view

The forgotten

blue chip

investment

Quite understandably, the whole emphasis of the publicity given to universities and their problems has been in their role as institutions devoted to the education of students.

Important as this is, what has tended to be overlooked is their research role—and even more so their working within the university system are not giving sufficient emphasis to publicising what universities are doing in this sphere.

That is why The Association of University Teachers last month produced its report, *The Universities' Contribution to the Nation*. This report places the education of students in its proper perspective in relation to the multi-purpose role of the universities. It points out that while universities are concerned with raising the educational level of as large a number of people as possible, it also has the task of advancing the frontiers of knowledge across a whole range of disciplines and at the same time giving assistance to industry, commerce and the public services in a variety of ways.

Considering this multi-purpose role in as balanced a way as possible, the outstanding feature which emerges is that, with one or two isolated exceptions, universities are the only institutions that the country possesses which carry out fundamental and basic research over the widest possible range of disciplines.

Yet government, when deciding how much of its resources to devote to universities, seems to be doing

its sums—and calculations—on the basis of student numbers and student costs. This has been highlighted recently in its fixing of fees for overseas students.

Leaving out the moral and ethical questions about the need to have overseas students, the Government appears to have got its sums all wrong. There seems to have been a straight arithmetic division of the number of students into the amount of recurrent university expenditure in order to arrive at what is said to be the economic cost of educating a student at a British university. Yet no account has been taken of the basic and applied research role of the universities.

A survey made some time ago (and there is no reason to think the position is very much different today) says that university teachers spend between 40 and 50 per cent of their time on basic and applied research with its allied activities. Although there is obviously a strong link between the research and teaching courses, the true cost of educating the students should come down to about half the Government's estimate, with the result that the fees now being stated to be the economic cost are really double what they should be.

Because the fundamental research being carried out is difficult to describe in lay terms and because of practical effects of it translated into apparent for some years, the criticism often arises that much of the research is of no importance. The whole history of research, however, shows that three or four pieces of research, which may seem to be of minor significance, once added together by the university-trained mind often become of great importance.

It is these facts which the universities should now bring home to the Government and the public. The AUT believes that every effort must now be made by all those who have an interest in the university system to drive this home to the Government and to ask it to correct its arithmetic as quickly as the situation allows.

The AUT goes further, since its report reveals that the universities have become, in fact, a "blue chip investment" for the Government in the projects carried out for industry, commerce and the public services. At a conservative esti-

mate the universities create income for the nation which amounts to about £500m a year. Several hundreds of millions of pounds can be added to this because the universities play a major role in producing the country's trained and skilled professional manpower. The cost of manual workers is borne by the industry concerned and not by public funds channelled through educational institutions.

Of course, much of the applied research, especially that which is carried out for industry, could not have been possible without the basic and fundamental research carried out over a number of years and which is of such quality as to have produced 12 Nobel Prize winners over the past decade. (It is ironic, incidentally, that in the week the Government announced its increased fees for overseas students it was also announced that an overseas post-graduate now working in this country had been awarded a Nobel prize.)

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Laurie Taylor



"Could we see the hands again please? Fine. Yes, that's six for the Car's Whiskers and just three for Hernandez's Whiskers. We can move on to the issue of food, and first of all take the wholefood pizza amendment?"

"No. No. Out of order." A chorus of disapproval rolled up the table to Quintock from the huddled group of student representatives. It had not, he reflected, been a pleasant afternoon. First of all he had been unable to obtain much more than a grudging acceptance from his colleagues on the board that the only way left to make further cuts in departmental expenditure was for staff to conduct late afternoon seminars by candlelight and bring their own personal staples when departmental machines needed refilling. Now they were into the second hour of formal discussion over the departmental Christmas party. He decided to let Jeff Droogie catch his eye. Droogie, snuggled up against the cold in an army greatcoat had, at least, once written a tolerable essay on the Whorlton hypothesis.

"Point of order," claimed Droogie. "How can you possibly ask people on the board of studies to choose between the Car's and Hernandez's when we haven't yet taken a vote on the motion relating to the type of band we want at the event. I mustn't want to vote 'yes' to the Car's Whiskers if we'd agreed to punk, but 'no' if we'd accepted the punk band." "But I thought we'd agreed to the punk band," grunted Ted Odgers. "No one raised any objections before."

"Well," said Quintock, wondering if he could afford another fourpence for one of the biscuits in the middle of the table, "most of the board, it's true, seemed to agree with your view, Ted, that this year's staff-student party should, in your own words, 'be getting dangerous'." He avoided mutual glances which failed to theorize the present economic predicament. But others rather seemed to agree with me about the poster. And of course the two positions are somewhat contradictory. "Look, Quintock, I'm all this about the poster?" Odgers aggressively lit a small workingman's cigarette and nodded collectively to the student reps at the end of the table. "Seems to be getting dangerous, doesn't it?"

"I thought my position was absolutely clear," protested Quintock. "These are difficult times for the department. Maybe if we were all lecturers in law, accountancy, or computation instead of communication and media studies, we could get away with a few anarchic gestures, but in the present circumstances, no heating, candlelit seminars and all that, it seems downright provocative to publicly associate the department with a band of that name."

"I just don't see what's wrong with the name," Droogie again. "It's only words. Depends on the reader what he chooses to see in them."

"Droogie," said Quintock, "for a long time now I've been coming to the conclusion that you're a bullfawn. I shall be amending your record shortly in order to make that clear to prospective employers. In the meantime, I'd strongly advise you to abandon your arbitrary theory of meaning ascription. It might indeed be true as I have observed in recent seminars that abstract nouns such as 'Ideology' and 'democracy' display a certain semantic slippage, and fail to denote an explicit material referent, but few in this university I feel would fail to grasp the precise associations which are intended to be aroused by a female punk-band called 'Dick Emery and the Chit'. Now, who's collecting the fourpences for these biscuits?"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The cuts and overseas student fees

Sir,—One has been asking oneself over the past few weeks: is it a crisis for higher education, or will it all blow over? Saugility was almost winning when I read in your last issue the Under-Secretary for Education's response to the reaction from universities to what has been proposed for their funding over the next three years: "a knee-jerk of the Left."

Does the gentleman concerned know and understand those who speak for universities and where they might be expected to stand in political terms?

May I quote from a letter written to my own Member of Parliament a few weeks ago: "There is a very real danger that the Government will alienate a whole generation of those at university unless the matter is dealt with in a manner which shows sensitivity and understanding."

With a timescale of a few more years and a method which did not discriminate against overseas students, the problem of a participation rate lower than the planned one could be dealt with. However, the crisis which will arise if there is no movement on the part of government is one in which individual universities advance their own sectional interests in the hope of gaining some minor advantage over others.

Yours faithfully,
R. N. FRANKLIN,
Vice-Chancellor,
The City University.

Sir,—Rather than report that some unspecified commentators were castigating the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics over a supposedly moderate press statement on overseas student fees (THES, November 16) it might have been more informative to have examined what the statement had said.

The CDP made exactly the same points as ever, but that both the uncosted benefits which accrue from the presence of overseas students and the most unfortunate circumstances which would follow from the implementation of a crude policy of full cost fees. Among other matters, the press release also recognized the onus for a substantial United Kingdom programme especially directed towards the need to equip a more consistent stance in regard to students from EEC countries and the desirability of abandoning overseas student quotas.

Such sentiments are so widely held that they could not be classed as "too moderate". One is therefore forced to assume that this modern form of obliquity related to the CDP's attempt at constructive criticism in arguing that such funds could be obtained from willing full-cost students should be redirected to provide a substantially increased scholarship scheme and where appropriate to label this contribution to overseas countries as aid.

If overseas student numbers were held at their present level, then every full-cost enrolment could enable two full-cost scholarships to be provided without any increase in the existing "ostensible" charge placed on overseas students in the present year. It follows that if (as some suppose) only one third of the present overseas enrolments would come at full-cost then all the

benefits to this country are immense. For this kind of contract to be effectively maintained, the country needs to preserve a strong and resourceful cultural representation overseas. Our European neighbours, France and the German Federal Republic, have seen the force of this argument and provide substantial support for the Alliance Française and the Goethe Institut.

While we recognize the need for economies, we believe most strongly that the Government should not imperil the long-term overseas economy upon which the national economy ultimately depends, and continues to make a useful and unique contribution.

Yours faithfully,
M. H. SHORT,
Head of Department of Linguistics and Modern English Language, N. CAMPBELL,
Institute for English Language Education, Lancaster University.

remuneration could be placed on full-cost scholarships. Admittedly this Robin Hood principle is not what the Government is proposing, but it would seem to be a practical approach well worth ventilating amid present vapourings. The polytechnics have much to offer overseas students and many of them have much to offer us. The CDP is as keen as any other body to see this two-way flow of benefit maintained.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID BETHEL,
Chairman,
Committee of Polytechnic Directors.

Sir,—Does junior Education Minister Dr Rhodes Boyson count leaders of the Church of England, the majority of British university vice-chancellors, Commonwealth heads of government, the Rhodes Union Congress, Times leader writers and some of his Ministerial colleagues among the "left-wing knee-jerkers" that, in answer to one of your questions, he has in last week's THES, he claims are behind the outcry over Government proposals for astronomical increases in the tuition

fees charged to overseas students? You may recall that Leader of the House of Commons, Norman St John Stevas, when Shadow Education Secretary, was sufficiently enraged to speak out strongly against much lower increases imposed by the last Labour Government.

Dr Boyson dismisses the stern opposition to fee increases by saying that "all the groans have come from the university lobbies and not from the general populace". This is simply not true.

A broad coalition has already formed to oppose Government policy on overseas students. It only remains for leaders of industry to join our side and point out how their interests will suffer by shutting out overseas students.

What kind of totalitarian government is it which sticks to a decision which is so clearly wrong and so widely opposed?

Yours sincerely,
TREVOR PHILLIPS,
President,
National Union of Students.

Clearly, the more access to higher education is restricted, the stronger the case for giving some form of deferred entitlement for later entry for "those qualified by ability, motivation and experience irrespective of age (ACACE's modification of the Robbins' principle). It is interesting to note Dr Halsey's table showing that no less than 46.2 per cent of university lecturers and 44.7 per cent of polytechnic lecturers now think that admission policies should be biased in favour of mature students.

ACACE hopes to stimulate a further dialogue with universities and polytechnics on the steps to be taken in this direction, and would welcome the cooperation of THE TIMES in this.

Yours sincerely,
H. D. HUGHES,
Mill Street, Islip, Oxford.

Both examples have made clear to us how particular contacts, mediated through the council, have continuing "beneficial" effects on Britain's external relations. In the case of China, we now have flourishing contacts with other disciplines through our English language work. This month we are training a dozen senior research scientists in English for a variety of fields, including aeronautical engineering.

In the case of Kuwait, we have just completed a similar language training programme for medical doctors. In all these cases we are conscious of the important role played by the council's officers in London and in representations overseas.

These examples provided by one department in one university in the United Kingdom demonstrate the advantages gained by this country from the activity of the British Council. When considered in the context of the overseas contacts with all further aid higher education institutions generated or mediated by the British Council, the economic, political and cultural

Unrecorded breach of faith

Sir,—The absence of THE TIMES since last November has made it too easy for some important issues to go unrecorded.

In February, the SSRC information of the number of places that might be offered to intending students in June, however, we were told that the number had been reduced. Almost a year later, we have been able to rely on SSRC allocation letter as meaning what it says. It can be assumed that this breach of faith was the result of pressure from DES.

There can be two views about the number of students that should be supported in this way. But it is difficult to find many precedents for a British Government regularly making decisions which have already been made by the universities. Government used to believe that, once a decision was committed, there should be no going back on the commitment.

This is extraordinary behaviour from a Government that has professed such strong beliefs in law and order, and in the sanctity of contracts, whether legal or moral.

Yours faithfully,
MAURICE KOGAN,
Professor of Government,
Brunel University.

Fircroft's return

Sir,—The Fircroft Trustees are pleased to announce that agreement has been reached with the Fircroft College for long-term courses in September, 1980.

Earlier this year the trustees requested the Charity Commissioners to draft a scheme based on the existing objects of the Fircroft College for a new constitution for the college under a new governing body. The scheme has now been approved by the trustees, and agreed by the Department of Education and Science.

The governing body will consist of nominees of national and local educational organizations as well as representatives of industry and the trade unions. The chairman will be the Rev Paul R. Clifford, recently retired as Rector of the Selby College, whose efforts have been largely instrumental in reaching agreement between the parties concerned.

The college will be directly aided, as previously, by the Department of Education and Science, following the agreement by the Fircroft Trustees that they will also grant-aid the college to the extent of the full market rent of the college buildings.

The inaugural meeting of the new governing body was held on October 12, and it was constituted as a separate and independent trust. The Fircroft Trustees have agreed to relinquish their own title to the college, and the new governing body, known as the Croft Trust, will be the new governors to adopt the name of Fircroft College Trust.

The leases of the college buildings and of the principal house but behind the college have been purchased and these will take effect forthwith.

The Fircroft Trustees wish to extend their thanks to all those who have helped, in one way or another, to try and re-establish the college. For the past 70 years the college has made a great contribution to widening dental adult education for working men, and the trustees wish to thank the governing body and the future equal success in the future.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER CADBURY,
Chairman of Croft Trustees.

VAT loss

Sir,—The University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology will lose £500,000 as a result of the increase in VAT announced in the Budget, as stated in THE TIMES last week. It will, in fact, lose approximately 7 per cent of £500,000, the difference between the old rate of 8 per cent and the new rate of 15 per cent.

Yours faithfully,
TIM YATES,
Director of Communications,
UMIST.

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A decisive nudge from the OU

Earlier this year the Open University celebrated the tenth anniversary of the granting of its Royal Charter. Ten years ago there were many lukewarm supporters as well as dogmatic detractors, who were frankly surprised that the idea had got even that far. Today the Open University is accepted by almost everyone as a permanent, and very distinguished, part of British higher education. It has been an authentic British success story in a decade when there have been few such stories of which to boast and fewer still that have worn as well as the Open University.

Lord Perry can rightly claim that the Open University has been second to none—and as the other contenders for praise include Sir Harold Wilson, Lady Lee, Sir Peter Venables and many others that is to say a great deal.

The first ten years of the Open University were not always easy. Although the partisan hostility of the returning Conservatives in 1970 was (narrowly) deflected, the university has continued to occupy a much more exposed political position than other universities. Part of the reason for this is that the university is still directly funded by the DES rather than receiving grant indirectly through the University Grants Committee. Over the years it has become more and more difficult to justify this anomaly.

Other universities enjoy a buffer provided by the UGC, the OU probably needs it more; and if the UGC feels that it cannot cope with what is admittedly an aberrant institution in conventional university terms, that is more a criticism of its own inflexibility than of the OU's peculiar character.

Another important reason is fear of the effects of dissemination of academic material on too wide a scale, whether through TV programmes or written course units—this attitude is summed up in the phrase "no one is to be the child of the child". Teaching regular students (ie young adult middle-class males) in the controlled environment of regular institutions about Marx is one thing; teaching the same subject to middle-aged housewives in

the freedom of their own homes is quite another. In this respect the OU has occasionally been the victim of its own success—rather as Penguin Books are seen by some to have more potential for "subversive" than the Oxford University Press.

A third and more fundamental reason is that the OU has changed the meaning of higher education and that has disturbed some people. Not only has it provided opportunities to study for a degree or tens of thousands who were effectively excluded by social circumstances, economic pressures, or lack of orthodox qualifications, but following the conventional route into higher education has been second to none—and as the other contenders for praise include Sir Harold Wilson, Lady Lee, Sir Peter Venables and many others that is to say a great deal.

The idea that motivation if sufficiently strong can overcome the handicap of inadequate (or even non-existent) qualifications has important consequences. It suggests that students whose higher education rather than being selected for it. Similarly the success of the OU in teaching its students at a distance using television, radio and correspondence courses has a radical impact on academic staff to teach cooperatively in teams rather than autonomously as individuals. Taken together these two ideas add a new and potentially revolutionary element to our tradition of higher education. Some will deplore this potential. We applaud it.

The OU has triumphed over the obstacles of its first decade, but the obstacles that it must face in its second seem almost as formidable. First, it must protect what it has already achieved as a unique institution. It must not allow itself to be swamped by the independent traditions of its university ways—accessible in its techniques, but elitist in its educational values.

All these concerns are genuine. But in spite of the crises the OU faces, it occupies a uniquely strategic position in British higher education. It, above all other institutions, can give the system a decisive nudge in the right direction. If it tries and if it succeeds, the twenty-first century in 1989 will be an occasion for even greater praise.

It is good news that the Government has decided to abandon the Protection of Official Information Bill. But it is much too soon to hope that that will prove a permanent victory for open government. The support of the Bill is represented in Whitehall, not least in the Home Office. Although temporarily assuaged by the Blunt affair, they are unlikely to have abandoned their restrictive views about freedom of information over night. The chances still are that a similar Bill will resurface sometime in the next two years.

The defects of the abandoned Bill were many. It "protected" information covering a wide area of imprecisely defined but important subjects. The Government (which might do practice have meant an almost unknown official) was to be judge in its own cause. Worse still was the appalling assumption of secrecy on which the Bill was based. The comparison with the "equivalent" legislation in the United States was humiliating; it gave free information; we were to protect it.

Nearly all comment so far—largely hostile even before the Blunt affair—has concentrated on the immediate and dramatic issues raised by this restriction on freedom of information. The spotlight has been on the journalists investigating possible scandals. But in such cases the making influence of the proposed legislation could be modified by public (and journalistic) opinion. If a new law was used to restrict journalists reporting on matters of genuine and widespread public concern, it would rapidly become an instrument of self-censorship. It would be a disaster for open government than

not only a statement of fact as

give new confidence and legitimacy to adult education. This is important not only to the OU, which following the Venables report hopes to place new emphasis on continuing education as an important theme of development during its second decade, but also to adult education which is at present suffering savage and largely unnoticed cuts.

The OU, of course, can rest content with the consolidation of its very great achievement. It may have at least for a while. Nor should its present role in providing degree-level education to so many thousands be in any way belittled. The job of simply maintaining the scale and the quality of the present operation is formidable enough. But it is even more important that the OU should realize its full potential, and apply what it has learned about distance learning for degree students to the wider field of continuing education.

This job, of course, is even more formidable and will require great resources, of imagination and faith as much as of money. The wider the OU casts its net, the louder will become the cries of "foul" (whether of a conservative or Marxist character). Within the university there will be those who believe that enthusiasm for continuing education may compromise hard academic credibility. OU graduates may themselves be more royalist than the king in defence of traditional standards.

In the intense competition for resources and the fear of failure to attract enough students, the OU is likely to be endemic in the 1980s, other parts of adult education may see its muscles in by the OU on their traditional territory. They may even feel that the OU will swamp the independent traditions of its university ways—accessible in its techniques, but elitist in its educational values.

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Impressive as Rowntree's 80 years ago, but a contribution to an acceptable definition of poverty in an affluent society that will burn like a slow fuse under the making of social policy for perhaps as many years ahead. It would be tragic if such an undertaking in the future could be hindered in any way by a lazy, defensive, or conservative welfare bureaucracy.

Government—like any large bureaucracy—is a poor judge of where to place the limits on freedom to inquire into its own actions. Indeed the self-sufficiency and impermeability of modern bureaucracies is a central problem of modern society recognized by both right and left. The former wishes to resolve it by abolishing bureaucracies; the latter, recognizing the foolishness of seeking to replace necessary complexity (and security) by convenient (and inequitable) simplicity, relies on greater democratic control to do the job for which open government is an absolute requirement.

Both agree it must be tackled somehow. So every Bill should oppose any similar Bill. In the future which are an attempt by Government to license investigation into its affairs (which are also ours) and to discourage its critics (however polite, restrained and British a fashion). Indeed they should do more. It is not enough simply to oppose secrecy by government. The real task is not to subject civil servants to a constant barrage of criticism, but to seek ways to produce a more relaxed relationship between government and "outsiders", to make our bureaucracies more permeable. The creation of a "British Brookings" would have been one way.

There are many elements that might enter into ratings of departmental quality. The qualifications, publications, research records and citation indices of staff; attractiveness to potential applicants and the degree of selectivity exercised for admission; peer ratings; research council studentships and research grants held; and, finally, the quality of higher awards; levels of support given by the university in terms of departmental expenditure per student or member of staff.

It is not difficult to suggest additions to such a list. It is our distance for this sort of thing well founded or merely a relic of the days when universities stood above the common herd in the scramble for resources? The next few years should tell.

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Degrees of excellence



William Taylor

Cuts and commercialism have given a sharper edge to the loose talk circulating since pre-Brown Paper days about some universities having in close in the 1980s.

For many, it is difficult to talk about the closure of universities, most of which have several departments of intellectual or professional distinction, when the country is littered with new and for the most part academically undistinguished colleges fishing in the same potential student pool. But duffer things have happened and are happening. Perhaps someone, somewhere has got a little list. I doubt it.

In the absence of any special redundancy terms, it may be safer and politically less costly to allow institutions and departments to wither on the vine rather than to plan their closure.

Some departments in some places are going to have difficulty in maintaining the quality of their entrants during the demographic trough. The development money that might have aided their climb out in a new and shiny Model E is not going to be available. Such nasty decisions as have to be made need to be based on the right criteria. But what criteria? Here it is instructive to compare what happened to the colleges of education in the 1970s.

In its 1976 document on restructuring the teacher training systems, the DES listed the considerations being taken into account in making decisions about the fate of individual colleges. Standards were among these considerations.

The available evidence was a mixed bag of subjective assessments by HMI, CMAA or validating universities, and the schools the risk of misinterpretations and abuse, better not to expose too much to public debate. The professional knows best.

In the school sector, this stance is increasingly attractive. Because of the risk of misinterpretations and abuse, better not to expose too much to public debate. The professional knows best. In the school sector, this stance is increasingly attractive. Because of the risk of misinterpretations and abuse, better not to expose too much to public debate. The professional knows best.

When the full story is told of how a complete sector of higher education disappeared in less than a decade—in the official terminology, was "firmly integrated with other higher education"—we may get a clearer picture of the importance attached to academic and professional excellence in making such judgments.

For that we may have to wait 30 years. On the other hand, we may never know. There were no league tables to refer to. The standards which were formulated the advice and took the decisions about college futures no doubt used whatever information and informed judgment they could get hold of; inevitably, it was better in some cases than in others.

What if the worst comes to the worst and there's a down to the university sector? Is the basis for decision-making likely to be very different?

In one respect, it emphatically should be. Excellence was only one consideration in the case of the colleges. In universities it must be the principal consideration.

Universities do not exist to serve the needs of defined geographical areas, however successful they may be in doing so, or to represent particular denominations. Their responsibility is first and foremost to the highest standards of scholarship and research.

But there is no single, agreed scale of excellence, either of institutions or of departments. There are few equivalents in this country to the detailed studies of subject by subject quality that have been carried out in the United States and elsewhere.

Carter's major study of graduate education on behalf of the American Council on Education of 1964 was followed five years later by a further survey by Rhoads and Anderson. Earlier this year the distinguished political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset and Everett Ladd published the results of a 1977 poll in which they asked over 4,000 university staff members to "name the five departments nationally in your discipline that have the most distinguished faculties".

The results were in many respects consistent with earlier surveys. Stanford, Harvard, Berkeley, Michigan, Yale, Chicago, Illinois, Columbia, Princeton and MIT featured prominently in the ratings, which covered a total of nineteen fields of study.

Lipset and Ladd, like their predecessors, were properly cautious about the interpretation of their results. In particular they were conscious of the inertia built into departmental reputations.

The availability of reasons why nothing much has been done along those lines in this country. Our system is smaller. In particular fields and subjects, everybody knows everyone else.

In the United States, state and private foundations straddle such informal categories as Ivy League, Major League, Minor League, Bush League and Academic Siberia. Here, higher education remains stratified. With few exceptions, the binary line rules out comparisons between polytechnics, colleges and universities. Among universities, such labels as Oxbridge, Red Brick, Green Field and Plate Glass define origins and location rather than quality.

For many purposes, it remains true that a degree is a degree is a degree. The "CNA" is explicitly required by its charter to base its standards upon those of the universities as if they comprised a single, indivisible entity.

But there are other, less easily defensible but perhaps no less important reasons why academic ratings has not caught on here. It evokes the inhibition of the degree as a single, indivisible entity.

Those who need to know about these things, and are capable of interpreting them sensibly, have means of finding out. Because of the risk of misinterpretations and abuse, better not to expose too much to public debate. The professional knows best.

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